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NEW STATESMAN

The secret constitution

An anatomy of the Cabinet Committee system

State capitalism –

— the prices we pay

Exclusive

Tribune Group vanishes

Richard Cobb

The Hundred Years' War

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The TUC tilts at windmills

The Labour Party's present claim to be the natural party of government rests on its ability to ride out economic crises even if it means holding wages down in order to raise profits and increase investment. For the fourth year in succession Labour is demonstrating this unique capability in the sensible expectation of impressing the electorate this October. Last July after the TGWU conference's rejection of Phase III the possibility of Labour carrying a fourth year of wage restraint and at a level of 7 per cent seemed remote in the extreme. In that sense the TUC's mumbling acquiescence has been an impressive diplomatic achievement for the Government. However, it has been a political disaster; it has been won because a host of influential trade union leaders, immersed daily in the teachings of the Treasury, have become willing participants in wage restraint.

Unable to reach any coherent position on restoring public expenditure cuts (due to the divisions between the public and private sector unions), the General Council have been casting around for an economic policy as well as for something for their shop stewards to do. They have alighted on the idea of work sharing. The 35 hour week has been a long standing demand but one hitherto not regarded as a solution to mass unemployment. There is much to recommend shorter hours in themselves – the possible educational benefits have been used to excellent effect by the Italian labour movement. It may in addition reduce the growth in unemployment. The Department of Employment estimate it might create anything between 100,000 to 500,000 jobs. But what is dangerous and muddled about the 35 hour slogan is that it may become a surrogate for the necessary TUC pressure on the essence of Government policy. The moral rhetoric used by some leaders about the 35 hour week is taking on the shrill tones of a crusade when in fact it can only be a palliative.

British labour works longer hours than every other EEC country but Luxembourg. The reason for that is not so much the length of our basic hours (the average normal working week is a little over 38 hours) but excessive overtime. It is particularly ironic that in 1977, when unemployment was rising sharply, overtime was taking the same upward path. Each week 250,000 manual male workers clock up over 8 hours overtime – the equivalent of 400,000 40 hour jobs. The level is especially high in manufacturing and transport. However, those industries where overtime is concentrated are low wage industries.

But in whatever way the working week is reduced, little employment might be created. Three other things might happen. There might merely be a reduction in output or an increase in overtime worked or an increase in productivity that eats up hidden underemployment. In 1964-66 when the working week was last reduced, extra overtime took up half the potential for increased jobs. On the TUC's own estimates, if overtime working were to increase by 40 per cent and there was a 10 per cent drop in output, unemployment would go down by less than 100,000. Moreover few trade unionists after three years of pointless retrenchment will now be prepared to accept reduced pay as a quid pro quo for reduced hours. As the TUC themselves again admit, labour costs would increase by 6 to 7 per cent as a result; the figure the Treasury are pressing for the whole of the wage round. The only possible way we could stall the effect of such labour cost increases on our overseas competitiveness would be co-ordinated international action to reduce the working week. There was little interest in that at Bonn.

The plain fact is that these arguments have been well rehearsed in front of union leaders. The TUC's own research department put them forward last week only to have them rebuffed. The depressing conclusion is that the TUC clings so stubbornly to this policy because it has no other.

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Notes on Politics and Power

How much do children really cost?

Frank Field writes: A close look at *Social Assistance*, the review of supplementary benefits published last week, reveals a major weakness: it pays almost no attention to the relative costs of children. A single person picks up £14.50 a week while a child under five attracts a weekly benefit of £4.10. These relativities have their roots in the original poverty scales drawn up by Rowntree as long ago as 1899. Expenditure on food then, as now, dominated the budgets of the poor. But the research estimating dietary needs was almost exclusively based on male prisoners. Arbitrary assumptions were made about the relative needs of women and children and these calculations still underpin today's benefits. On average the children's rates are only 43 per cent of those paid to an adult, but any mother will testify how the costs of a teenager are well above those of an adult.

This was the message poor families tried to put across when questioned during recent enquiries by the Supplementary Benefits Commission. On practically every criterion used, households with children were shown to be in more desperate poverty than other groups of claimants. But the review team failed to see the importance of the answers which poor families gave to official questioning.

It is time the government set in hand budgetary studies to produce an accurate measurement of the relative costs of children. But these studies should not delay an immediate increase of support to households with children.

The government is already committed to running down the means-tested welfare state, although precious little progress has so far been made in this direction. It should, therefore, publish a five-year timetable in which the relative value of insurance benefit will be raised to lift the poor free of means-tested support.

The DHSS has been more successful in helping Labour fulfil its election manifesto on open government than its pledge to eradicate poverty. Thirty eight working papers have been published which formed the background to *Social Assistance*.

A rare view inside the British Communist Party

Godfrey Hodgson writes: Roger Graef's new series on the British Communist Party, to be shown shortly on ITV, provides more information about the Party and more insight into its inner workings than has been available to outsiders in any medium.

Graef, who works with the remarkable cameraman Charles Stewart, operates firm rules: he asks for access to all meetings, formal or informal, related to a subject nominated in advance, and he films events exactly as they happen, with no interviews and the minimum of interference with the natural flow of events.

The leadership's decision to let Graef in on these terms sprang (presumably) from the same awareness of the need for change that led the political committee to produce a major revision of the Party's policy, *The British Road to Socialism*. It is interesting, in view of clichés about the Party's monolithic structure that individual branches were left to decide for themselves whether or not to admit the Granada cameras. Six did. Six, mostly dominated by hardliners, refused. Graef's three films follow the *British Road* from its drafting in 1976 to its acceptance at the 1977 Party Congress.

Communists confer – Irene Brennan with Bert Ramelson

What emerges very clearly, to my mind, from the second and third films is that the leadership of the British Party, like the group immediately around Georges Marchais in the French Party, is essentially centrist. In the second film, we are given an unforgettable vignette of Bert Ramelson crushing a Stalinist revolt in committee before the Congress in unmistakably Stalinist style. He interrupts, he wags his fingers in the dissidents' faces, he bullies, and he manipulates procedure, until even one of his opponents says with a bitter smile, 'As a chairman, you're magnificent in dominating the place'. This seems to be what has happened in the Spanish CP, where the old leadership, aware of the need to abandon the more unacceptable illiberal manifestations of Leninism, knows only the Leninist way of making the rank and file follow. It is significant that George Matthews, perhaps the most influential ideologist in the British Party, actually quoted Lenin on the benefits of having a good punchup at the Congress . . . so long as the Party then moves forward.

In the third film we see the other face of the turmoil in the Party, and of the leadership's dilemma: the Soviet Party has sent Kunyaev, an unprecedentedly senior delegate, to show its benevolence towards the British comrades' modest policy revisions; the language of the formal resolution of greeting is too much for a group of young, libertarian Communists, who see in it an attempt to reverse hard-won position, criticising the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Now it is their turn to feel the weight of the leadership's disapproval, expressed this time by a formidable figure, the former nun Irene Brennan. Her performance, as she struggles successfully to repress dissent while remaining technically correct, is a starring role.

The three films paint a rich portrait of a Party struggling to escape from its past, yet unable to do so in a convincing way because of the legacies, the aspirations, the psychological conditioning and even the debts of honour of the past. No one who sees them will be able to believe, however, that there is no debate in the Communist Party: certainly not after watching the intensity of debate at the Congress. 'I did not join the Communist Party,' says one handsome young working-class delegate, 'to become a reformist. I am a revolutionary.' And George Matthews sums up, subtly, but with truth at several levels: 'The demand for democracy today is not a reformist demand, it is a revolutionary demand'.

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The day Benn waved goodbye to a good idea

David Ross Writes: The coy flirtation by the Department of Energy with the idea of winning power from benign, renewable sources comes to a head next Tuesday (July 25) in a committee room of the House of Commons. Mr Tony Benn is due to meet the General Purposes Sub-Committee of the Select Committee on Science and Technology to discuss his White Paper on alternative sources. The meeting, in democratic form, is to be public with Friends of the Earth and other interested parties present to demonstrate popular participation. It would have been even more democratic if it had taken place at a time when it might have been effective.

The meeting was first called for 6 July but those who turned up at Committee Room 15 discovered that it had been postponed at what is officially described as 'short notice', because

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Mr Benn had had to attend a Cabinet Committee. No-one is allowed to know what the Cabinet Committee was about but I can reveal that it was held at 6 pm. But why, some MPs are wondering, could not Mr Benn have spent the hour-and-a-half before his next meeting discussing the subject that could make nuclear power, and all the nuclear scientists inside his Department, less in demand?

An even more significant event took place two days earlier. Mr Glyn England, chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board, gave his imprimatur to the view that wave energy, which is the main alternative source for Britain, can provide 'enough (power) to supply the whole of Britain with electricity at the present rate of consumption.' This heresy was uttered in a speech to the staff at Fawley oil-fired power station, near Southampton, and was almost ignored by the tame energy correspondents of the national papers.

Mr England went far beyond the more cautious estimates reported by me in the NS on 9 June. There is common ground in the acceptance of the calculations of the CEGB's own leading team of researchers that there are 120 gigawatts of power available from the waves that surround us. But, instead of accepting the ultra-cautious estimates which I reported bringing down the available resources to between 12 and 30 gigawatts, after losses in capture, conversion and transmission, Mr England argued that 'probably about one-third' of the power could 'actually be got to the consumer'. That would be 40 gigawatts, as much as we have ever needed. It is a happy day for a journalist when he is accused of 'extreme assertions' by Alex Eadie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Department of Energy (NS 23 June) and finds that those assertions are up to three times as conservative as the conclusions reached by the head of the very organisation that has to produce the electricity.

Mr England was speaking a few miles from the site of a Cockerell Raft, one-tenth scale, which is functioning in the Solent. A full-scale prototype could be put into the open sea for £5 million. Stephen Salter, inventor of Salter's Duck, has told me that he could for £30 million put a line of 50 Ducks to sea, the equivalent of a 30 megawatt power station. But the Government is insisting on handing out its largesse in droplets of £2-£3 million annually with no long-term plan, stepping up the scale from 1/150th to 1/10th to 1/4 and delaying interminably the day when it would decide to invest seriously in wave energy. The Japanese, meanwhile, are spending £22 million on a seven-year programme for their (probably) less efficient device at full scale.

With the CEGB increasingly chary of committing itself to an expensive programme of more coal-fired power stations, the need to keep the miners happy, the growing concern of the nuclear scientists that their life's work might prove to be wasted and the dangers of an environmentalist movement developing as a new CND, it is not surprising that Mr Benn, who normally has time for everyone, found himself unable to spare 90 minutes for a public discussion of his plans. The new date of 25 July is probably about 10 days before Parliament rises. By the time the Minutes of the discussion are published, it will be difficult and probably impossible to arrange a Parliamentary debate before the magic month of October . . .

No volunteers, no identity parades.

Nicola Squire writes: Disturbing evidence that young black defendants are losing the right to proper identification procedure came to light at the Old Bailey last week. In the case of *Regina v Charlton and Others*, in which seven black youths were charged with causing grievous bodily harm, Detective Inspector Saxton of the Lewisham police force said it was becoming impossible to organise identity parades: in his and other areas, young blacks were refusing to volunteer to line up – such was their antipathy to the police.

Identity parades are notoriously unreliable, but they do provide a minimal safeguard. D.I. Saxton said the procedure had been replaced with a simple confrontation technique whereby the witness was brought face to face with the defendant and asked point blank whether he was the right person.

The Community Liaison Officer who was present when the defendants in this case were interviewed by the police, told the court that the interviews were racialist in tone and that 14 and 15 year old defendants were shouted at and threatened. It was hardly surprising in so hostile a climate that other young blacks were refusing to participate in identity parades.

Free Speech:

In defiance of Select Committees

The character of our Parliament, with its emphasis on Ministerial accountability through debates and questions and statements in the House, has hardly changed in a century which has seen the fundamental change from a 'regulatory' to an 'interventionist' state. The interventionist state has acquired an enormous public bureaucracy engaged on an array of policy-making, legislative, judicial, service, supervisory, inspectorial, representational, transaction-processing and production functions which affect every aspect of our lives. The growth of such a bureaucracy is a feature of all advanced societies and a natural consequence of legislation and executive action to protect workers, to provide decent living standards and to manage the economy. I look forward to its continuing development. It is important in a democracy, however, to ensure that the legislature has the power to call the management of such a bureaucracy to account for its actions. The debating chamber is not an effective forum for the enforcement of public accountability: it is impossible to pursue a line of enquiry in a debate or at question time.

Ministers and top civil servants can be called to account only by the development of a system of investigatory specialist committees, with each committee shadowing a major department or function of government. The establishment of such a committee system is only the first step on the road to public accountability. The second requirement is that the committees, or their members, have an adequate supporting staff capable of assisting MPs to analyse the policies, the calculations and the attitudes of the Executive. The third requirement is much more information about the working of the Executive, which in this country is exceptionally secretive. To provide this information, we need two major reforms. The first, as Robert Kilroy Silk says ('Down With Select Committees' NS 7 July), is a Freedom of Information Act. The second, rarely mentioned, is a wholesale reform of our national accounts so that we can see not only the costs of public expenditure programmes but also their objectives and their results. At the moment, we're told what we're spending but not what we're buying. We have no idea of the impact or value of huge spending programmes – on assistance to private industry, for example, or on regional development.

A massive increase in the power of Parliamentary scrutiny may be said to strengthen the power of Opposition. In that Labour governments exist to use the Parliamentary process to change society and Conservatives exist to put the clock back, increased scrutiny, particularly as it means delay, could give the Conservatives a valuable weapon. The necessary counterweight must be the power to timetable all legislation. This would mean that though governments would be forced to justify their actions more fully than in the past, they would be sure of getting their legislation enacted so long as they had a majority.

Opponents of the development of a powerful investigatory committee system consider that it would lead to consensus government. It is true that committee staffs might try to lead committees towards anodyne agreement and at the moment there is pressure on members to produce unanimous reports. The counterbalance to this tendency would be to permit committee members to produce minority reports and either to enable committee members to engage their own research assistants or to provide research groups for each political party on a committee as a recent Labour Party NEC paper has proposed.

Our Parliament has coped remarkably well with the rising tide of legislation. It is an effective forum for debate on general principles and issues and for the redress of grievance. It can rise to great heights of party struggle, concern and drama on essential questions of public policy. Some politicians – the Thespians – can see it as nothing else. What they fail to observe is the great grey bureaucracy rolling on behind the scenes, a bureacracy with a will of its own, with the power to thwart political initiative, too often answerable only to itself. Occasionally, the Executive is stopped in its tracks by a group of determined MPs or even an individual MP. Sometimes that's a service to us all. It might happen more often, or more effectively, if we had better means of asking the questions that get to the roots of policy. What is the objective of this spending programme? How does it fit into Government policy? Who is accountable for it? Why was this path to the objective chosen rather than that one? How shall we measure its results and weigh its benefits? To answer those questions we need a whole reform package – full-time MPs, better supported MPs, more information and the basic structure of a committee system which can act as a countervailing power against the Executive.

John Garrett MP

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The secret constitution

The Cabinet's organisation is a deep secret: MPs are forbidden to ask questions about Cabinet Committees. **Bruce Page** explores a shrouded, but influential system.

Let us begin with a success story. Next week, a White Paper will be published which goes some way towards breaking up the monolithic powers of the BBC and the established ITV companies. It adopts a good many of the modestly radical ideas which the Annan Committee on Broadcasting put forward, after much research, in 1977.

Of course, the White Paper has yet to become law. But its publication is a victory gained in the teeth of Civil Service conservatism: the official view in the Home Office being that the status quo in television is all that British society can or should aspire to. Victory was gained through the Prime Minister's creative manipulation of the Cabinet Committee system – an influential part of our national constitution, but one which operates almost entirely in secret.

Bluntly, Mr Callaghan packed the personnel of the committee that dealt with broadcasting. The significance of the story is that when it is set alongside that of Official Secrets reform – which was handled by a different committee, stacked otherwise, and has so far been inglorious, not to say dishonourable – the considerable weaknesses of the Cabinet Committee system are thrown into unmistakable relief.

Lord Annan's committee reported last summer, with its recommendation of a fourth, pluralist TV channel – to be supported by public funds, as well as advertising revenue, and commissioning its programmes from a wide variety of sources. The Home Office, under the lenient supervision of Lord Harris of Greenwich, was given the task of drafting a White Paper on the subject.

This document took shape during autumn 1977: essentially, it rejected all the Annan reforms as being impractical, unnecessary or too expensive. It proposed to leave the television system entirely in the hands of the bureaucracies now controlling it. In December the Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees, submitted his department's draft to No 10 Downing Street, together with a list of Cabinet Ministers who would, in the opinion of the Home Office, form a suitable committee to examine the draft in detail.

The Cabinet, like any other large administrative body, must always delegate a great deal of work to smaller groups. But in less exalted structures – the boards of industrial companies, the management committees of local Labour Parties – the membership of any sub-committee is normally a matter of record.

Not so with Cabinet Committees. They are shadowy sub-divisions of a body which, for all its national importance, has only a shadowy existence itself. The formal position in Whitehall is that Cabinet meetings 'do not occur', even though their rather sketchy minutes turn up thirty years later in the Public Record Office. In humbler life, the personnel of a sub-committee will normally be voted by the larger committee of which it is a part. But a Cabinet Committee consists simply of those persons whose names the Prime Minister chooses to approve. Generally, even Cabinet Ministers have very little knowledge of the make-up of Committees on which they do not serve themselves.

They know, however, that what usually matters about a committee is who is missing from it, rather than who is on it – and the list which the Home Office suggested for the broadcasting committee was exactly a case in point. Certain Cabinet Ministers would have to be on such a committee for purely organisational reasons: the Home Secretary himself; the Foreign Secretary, David Owen (because of the BBC's overseas broadcasts); the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland (because of regional implications); and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Joel Barnett (because of the public-expenditure implications).

> 'It helps civil servants to tell the ins from the outs. If I quote the wrong name for a committee, then I'm not an important fellow'

Organisationally indispensable they might be. But there was not a minister on the list known to have taken any detailed interest in broadcasting affairs. And the one 'outsider' nominated, Mrs Shirley Williams from Education and Science, was equally innocent of any such connection. Carefully *excluded* were the names of three ministers known to be interested in broadcasting reform: Tony Benn, Roy Hattersley and William Rodgers.

Had the Prime Minister let this carefully-packed list go through, then the Annan Report would have been effectively sterilised. But on broadcasting – unlike Official Secrets – Mr Callaghan is motivated by something akin to radicalism: specifically, a hearty dislike of the BBC and ITV hierarchies, whom he believes to be guilty of undue arrogance, and cruelty to politicians.

Therefore he rejected the draft White Paper, and, more important, the proposed Cabinet Committee list. He brought in Hattersley, Rodgers and Benn to the Committee, and put himself in the chair. The Committee was now packed in the opposite sense: at its January meeting Mr Rees attempted to defend the conservative paper that his advisers had produced, and in the words of one interested witness 'he got his balls chewed off.'

The membership of the committee now became known – not publicly, but on the grapevine to most broadcasters with an active interest in the fate of the Annan Report. Throughout the spring, its members were energetically lobbied by television producers objecting to the idea that the powers of the BBC and ITV should be re-established without modification. During March and May the 'radical' side in the committee won most of the arguments. They were better briefed, and they were encouraged by the Prime Minister, who got his personal advisers Bernard Donoghue and David Lipsey to draw up an 'anti-White Paper'.

Recently, the Secretary to the Cabinet, Sir John Hunt, was asked to justify the practice of keeping the membership of Cabinet Committees secret. He replied that if members' identities were known, they might be 'subjected to pressure', and the story of the broadcasting committee is plainly a case in point. There is no evidence that the pressures applied to its members were unwelcome: but they resulted last week in the full Cabinet's decision, endorsing the committee's finding, to send to the printers a White Paper which adopts many of the 'impractical' reforms which the civil servants were determined to suppress; notably, the 'pluralist' fourth channel, to be operated by a new Open Broadcasting Authority. Some people may think this a bad result. Others, perhaps, will think that a society in which pressure cannot be applied to office-holders is not a democracy, but a bureaucracy tempered by plebiscites.

If, however, one does read this story as a triumph of democracy, it remains a triumph of a strictly limited kind. Exactly the same system has produced the opposite effect in the case of Official Secrets reform.

Labour's commitment to open government was a manifesto pledge in 1974. Not only were the notorious Section II provisions of the Official Secrets Act to be repealed: there was to be a new measure which would 'put the burden on public authorities to justify withholding information'. Whatever may be said about interpretation, there can be no doubt that this represented a pledge on official secrecy far more comprehensive than anything promised to the voters about reform of television.

The White Paper which was produced on Wednesday scarcely pretends to redeem the pledge. The catch-all nature of the present Official Secrets Act is abolished – so that not all unauthorised disclosures are automatically criminal. There is no right-to-know clause: chiefly, the proposed 'reform' merely defines more closely those classes of information which supposedly require the protection of criminal sanctions, leaving civil servants to face internal disciplines if they disclose without authority much in-

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Left, suitably, and right: Tony Benn, Secretary of State for Energy, and Roy Hattersley, Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection: The two cabinet ministers whom Mr Callaghan used as balance-weight to get the result he wanted in the Cabinet Committee on broadcasting. From different positions, both rely for support on their reputation as radicals. In the centre: Sir John Hunt, Secretary to the Cabinet, the mandarin who keeps track on the Premier's behalf of the labyrinthine committee system. Which of them is the most powerful?

formation which would be automatically public in other systems of government.

On this question the views – or prejudices – of the Prime Minister accord entirely with those of the Civil Service: that is, he regards information as an insider's prerogative, one of the necessary advantages that he or she brings to the conduct of business. Under the Callaghan regime, 'leak inquiries' have been pursued with extreme rigour.

And these views of Mr Callaghan's were made flesh in the personnel of the Cabinet Committee which supervised the drafting of the White Paper. Known (under the curious classification system, of which more later) as GEN 29, it was chaired by Mr Callaghan himself, and contained:

> Merlyn Rees (Home Secretary), Denis Healey (Chancellor), David Owen (Foreign Secretary), Lord Peart (Lord Privy Seal), Michael Foot (Lord President), Fred Mulley (Defence Secretary), Elwyn Jones (Lord Chancellor), Shirley Williams (Education & Science), Edmund Dell (Secretary of State for Trade) and Sam Silkin (Attorney-General).

Again, the unavoidable administrative needs come through: plainly, such a committee must include the heads of 'sensitive' departments like the Treasury, Ministry of Defence and Foreign Office, together with Lord Peart, whose Civil Service Department was responsible for drafting papers on official attitudes to information-dispensing (a case, one might say, of gamekeeper turned gamekeeper). Equally plainly, such Ministers would not find it easy to take their officials along in support of a radical view on official secrecy – even if, like Dr Owen, they might find their party following enhanced by such a stand.

But the critical point is the absence, this time, of Hattersley and Benn: seen, by the Labour Party at large as contenders, from right and left, for the inheritance of its radical tradition. There is no administrative reason, of course, why the Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection and the Secretary of State for Energy should be on the Official Secrets committee. But then there is no administrative reason why they should be on the broadcasting committee. The truth is simply that the Prime Minister thought their radical commitments would be useful in one case, and a regrettable nuisance in the other.

A SIGNIFICANT aspect of the Cabinet Committee system is that it is virtually impossible for anyone outside the Cabinet Office to have a complete, up-to-date knowledge of its structure. Given that there are always certain parameters to be observed (some Ministers are unsackable, some jobs have got to be discharged) the system is capable of instantaneous and covert manipulation at the whim of the Prime Minister and his advisers. *Organization of Cabinet Committees*, the book which describes the system (and is classified as 'confidential') is issued to ministerial departments, but it is usually six months or more out of date.

Knowledge is power, said Hobbes, coining the maxim which all Whitehall life observes: and the fact that the Prime Minister is the only politician with access to all the intricacies of the system is central to its nature. It is part of the Faustian bargain which the Prime Minister of the day makes with the central bureaucracy: they operate on his behalf a highly personal power-machine which makes it difficult for Ministers to challenge his will on specific issues; the consequence, however, is that the Prime Minister is apt to become more dependent upon his officials than upon his colleagues. The effect was seen in extreme form in the last days of the Heath administration, when the Head of the Civil Service, William Armstrong, became on his own admission something close to deputy prime minister.

Naturally, very few Cabinet Ministers or senior civil servants would admit the truth of such an indictment – nor should such an indictment suggest that de-mystifying the committee systems would neutralise all our political woes. But before exploring the mandarin subtleties of the argument, it is necessary to give an anatomy of the system as it stands, in so far as its shape can be made out through the mist of initials and quasi-acronyms in which it is clothed.

In doing so, there is a general principle to observe, which is that most of the structure represents nothing more than ordinary, rational delegation; just as the anatomy of a Mafia syndicate, once disclosed, turns out to resemble for the most part that of any orthodox business concern. As one Cabinet Office veteran explains, what one looks for in the Cabinet Committee system is the occasional, critical divergence from rationality – and always, for the contrast between what is there, and what might be there but has been omitted.

As one might expect, there are two types of committes: *standing committees*, which fulfil regular or anyway slowly-evolving functions, and *ad hoc committees*, which are set up to deal with issues of the moment. But both types bear classifications which are peculiar to the Prime Minister of the day, a feature which emphasises the personal, idiosyncratic nature of the system. At any one time there are usually 20-25 standing committees doing business, of which about half really matter. These are identified by letter-combinations.

Ad-hoc committees are numbered as they are set up, with an overall tag for the Prime Minister who creates them: the whole system being started afresh with a change of Prime Minister. That is to say, all ad-hoc committees under Callaghan are tagged GEN (for 'general'), with a number: GEN 38, for instance, having been a committee of junior ministers, assembled under Peter Shore, the Environment Secretary, to examine the problems of the inner cities. Since Mr Callaghan's advent as Premier, the GEN numbers have risen to about 130 – though most of the groups have served their ad-hoc purpose, and become inactive. (A GEN which was set up to examine relationships between the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Cabinet met once, agreed, and was disbanded.)

Under both Wilson administrations, ad hoc committees were labelled as MISC (for 'miscellaneous'). This is not a reflection of the Wilsonian style of government: it is simply that the label alternates with change of premier between GEN and MISC, so that Edward Heath's ad-hoc committees were numbered as GENs.

The code-names of the standing committees also change with a change of premiership. Sometimes, this is due to real administrative evolution, but mostly it reflects nothing more than Whitehall's penchant for a swift turnover of jargon. 'In conversation, it helps civil servants to separate the ins from the outs' is the way one former economic adviser puts it. 'If I happen to quote the wrong name for the principal economic committee, then it shows I'm not an important fellow any more.'

The present name for this committee is EY, derived loosely from 'economic strategy'. It is not, however, significantly different from what was known variously under Harold Wilson as the Steering Committee on Economic Policy (SEP) and the Ministerial Committee on Economic Strategy (abbreviated less happily to MES). It is chaired by the Prime Minister, and it includes Denis Healey (Chancellor), Merlyn Rees (Home Secretary), David Owen (Foreign Secretary), Michael Foot (Lord President), Eric Varley (Industry), Tony Benn (Energy), Roy Hattersley (Prices), Albert Booth (Employment), Peter Shore (Environment), Edmund Dell (Trade), Shirley Williams (Education), Harold Lever (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster) and Joel Barnett (Chief Secretary to the Treasury).

The membership of EY, which meets at least fortnightly and usually more often, defines the Cabinet's 'first team'. There is then a companion economic committee, code-named EI and chaired by Eric Varley, which is supposed to deal with the industrial implementation of the economics strategies determined by EY: although this includes the senior figures of Booth, Dell, Hattersley and Lever, it also takes in the 'territorial'

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Ministers for Scotland and Wales (Bruce Millan and John Morris) and two non-Cabinet members in Gerald Kaufman and Alan Williams, Ministers of State for Industry.

The convention of having separate committees to deal with the strategy and tactics of economic management has been established for some time: EI is plainly the descendant of what was called IDV under Wilson. But the real difference between them is to do with political seniority, rather than specialisation of task. Any matter of industrial development, if it excites the interest of political heavyweights, will be taken over by EY or by the full Cabinet – as happened with the recent argument over the National Enterprise Board plan to allow lucrative private shareholdings in its proposed micro-electronics investment, which was a case of a tactical question which roused larger political passions.

EY has an offshoot called EY(P) which has often been much busier than its parent: the brackets denote a sub-committee, and the P is for 'pay'. This committee, which is chaired by Roy Hattersley, and contains Michael Foot, Eric Varley, Albert Booth and Merlyn Rees, is concerned with pay settlements, and it takes an active, negotiating role – unlike the monitoring work of its Wilsonian predecessor, known as EC(P). During the recent pay round EY(P) met almost weekly, and covered much extra ground by circulation of paperwork.

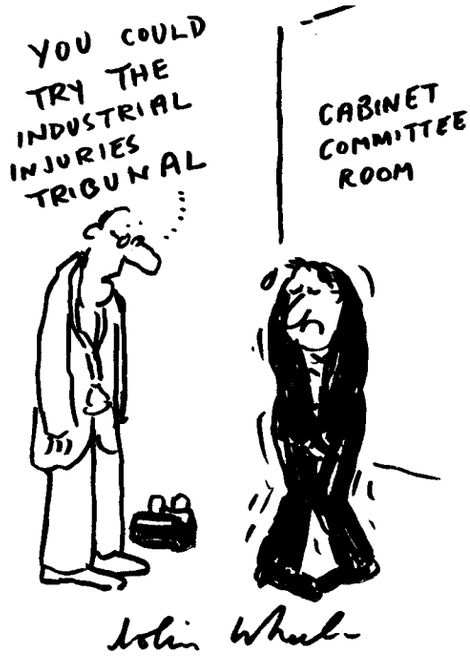
Constitutionally, it is something of a development for a regular piece of Cabinet machinery to be part of the daily detail of pay negotiations. But a larger point is made by contrasting the busy presence of EY(P) with a striking *absence* from the structure: there is no Cabinet Committee to oversee monetary policy. Monetary questions are, of course, discussed in EY, but the full committee is far too cumbersome to give the workings of the financial system the attention that EY(P) gives to wages. Monetary decisions are made quite informally by the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and their officials, being announced to EY as accomplished fact. (Generally, EY members learn of a change in interest-rates by reading their newspapers.) Much useful work might be done by a monetary sub-committee of EY, but it seems that Premiers, Chancellors and Treasury officials have found daily autonomy more tempting.

EY occasionally takes energy questions, but their normal home is the energy committee, ENM. This includes Joel Barnett, Roy Hattersley, Shirley Williams, David Owen and Bruce Millan (Scotland). One would expect the Energy Secretary, Tony Benn, to be included, which he is. But one would also expect him to be in the chair, which is actually taken by Eric Varley. Here is a subtle refinement of the system: given Benn's following, there could be no question of his exclusion from the publicly-appointed Cabinet, but within the secret system of committees the Premier can register disfavour by excluding Benn from chairmanships, which are reserved for trusties like Varley and Rees.

Merlyn Rees chairs HS, which is the largest committee because Callaghan has brought together into it the ministers for education and social services, who had their own committee under Wilson, separate from the Home Secretary. But this, like all phenomena in the system, is a political and not an administrative grouping: every position in a Cabinet Committee is personal to the person concerned; at major committees, deputies are not accepted, and there is no concept of vice-chairmanship. Lacking its chairman, a committee simply does not meet.

As well as being home affairs, education, social services, HS takes most housing matters: dealing with much business which never goes to cabinet. (Transport questions generally go to EI.)

At the other end of the size range is DOP, which brings together defence and foreign affairs under the Prime Minister's chairmanship, and is the oldest committee, in that it goes recognisably back to the Committee of Imperial Defence of 1904. It includes, naturally, the Foreign Secretary, together with the Home Secretary and the Chancellor: its curiosity is that the Chief of



the Defence Staff is normally present, whereas in other committees departmental officials are merely on call outside. The reason advanced is the technical nature of the problems discussed in DOP: it appears, however, to present the military with something of an advantage when public spending cuts are in question.

Of course, some standing committees have only slight, or transient importance, such as QF, which deal with the Queen's Speech. (RJ, which dealt with the Jubilee, has been disbanded: it was perhaps felt that an ad-hoc approach would be inappropriate.) But LG, which organises the legislative programme, is always crucially important. This is chaired by Michael Foot, and contains the Attorney-General, Sam Silkin, together with the Lord Advocate for Scottish legalisms, the Chief Whip, Michael Cocks and his House of Lords equivalent (the Captain of the Gentlemen at Arms, Lady Llewellyn-Davies).

Certain committees seem to be in quiet phases, after periods of intense activity: CQM, which deals with Common Market questions; CFM dealing with overseas fisheries; and the two devolution committees DVY (formerly DP) and DVP (formerly DS), which bear roughly the same relationship to each other as EY bears to EI. Despite left-wing suspicions that there is a security and intelligence committee, this does not seem to be the case: possibly, however, a committee would provide better supervision than the present system in which MI5 reports to the Home Secretary individually, and MI6 to the Foreign Secretary. There is, however, a committee on terrorism caller TRM, which may be one of the few cases where secrecy over membership has an obvious justification.

It is a relatively minor committee called RD, under David Owen, which provides one of the neater examples of the absurdities which secrecy can generate. As the business of RD is to co-ordinate overseas aid, it includes Judith Hart, the Minister for Overseas Development. Recently, Mrs Hart was questioned by a sub-section of the Commons Expenditure Committee, and was asked persistently to agree that there ought to be some organisation to co-ordinate overseas aid. Her answer became more and more contorted as she tried to answer truthfully without breaking the rules which disallow the simple answer: 'There is such a body, and I am on it.'

INEVITABLY, there is no hard-and-fast way of deciding which issues justify a standing committee, and which should remain ad-hoc. Under Edward Heath, Irish policy was handled by GEN 29: in 1974 under Labour it graduated to a standing committee coded IN. On the other hand, Southern African affairs in this government are handled by GEN 12, which is a committee that meets rather rarely, but receives a great deal of paperwork from the Foreign Secretary.

But GEN/MISCs can obviously provide more opportunity for discreet manipulation than do standing committees, which must to some extent recognise on-going bureaucratic structures. There is, for instance, a GEN 91 to deal with the press, chaired by Peter Shore. At present, it is not doing business, but it might become very busy if Mr Callaghan could get a successful election behind him: whereupon the development of its membership will become an interesting study, as was the case with broadcasting and Official Secrets. (Ad hoc committees tend to be assembled in the flare of crisis. They fade into inactivity if the crisis dies down, or if nobody can think what to do about it. A case in point is GEN 112 on British Steel, now baffled and inactive.)

Suggestions were made early this year that, by way of a commitment to openness, the Government might publish the list of Cabinet Committees. There was a frosty response from the Prime Minister. Many wondrous casuistries are advanced to justify the preservation of secrecy: the finest, perhaps, being one ascribed to Michael Foot, which argues that if committees were not secret, then ministers would arrange their own ultra-private cabals, and not even the Cabinet Secretariat would know what they were up to. But no realistic insider doubts the truth, which one Cabinet Minister puts

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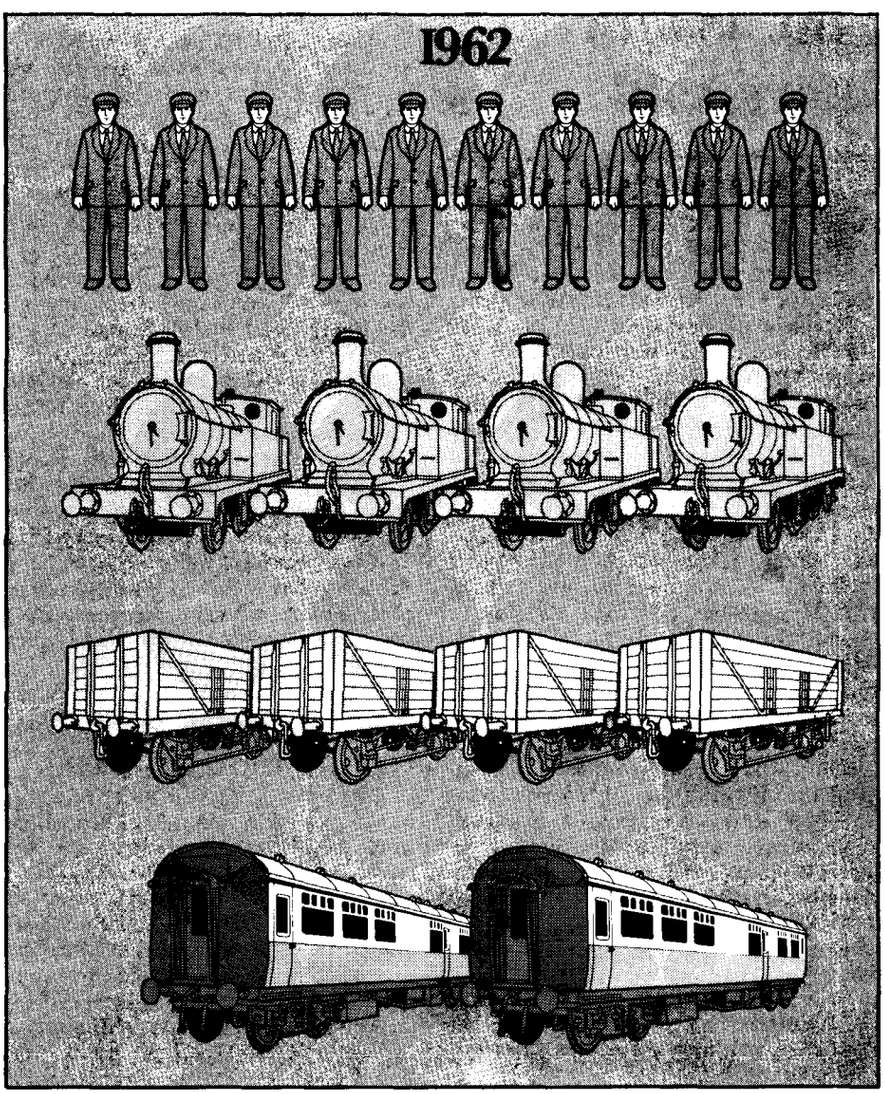
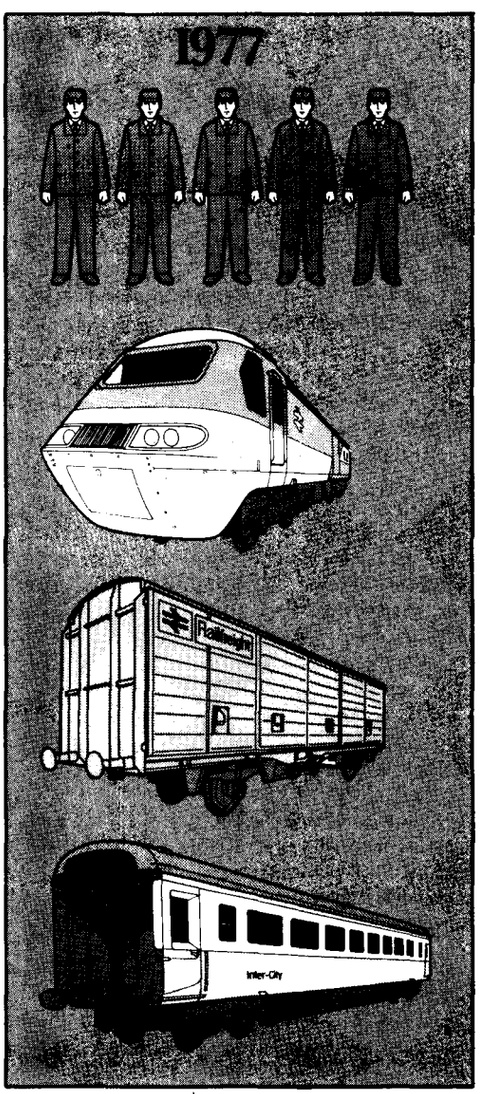
As you can see, British Rail have to work a lot harder these days.





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Not that these figures add up to a perfect rail system.

They don't.

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very bluntly: 'It's just very handy for Jim, when he puts me on a committee, that I don't necessarily know what committee he's putting one of my competitors on.'

The committee system is of course not new: after its modest origins in 1904, it received its first massive expansion from Lloyd George, and its complexity appears to have increased greatly with the last ten years, which have seen the government's operations extend into more and more areas of national life. It has been stoutly defended by Robert Blake, Patrick Gordon Walker and Harold Wilson: all with variants of the same argument, which is that it strengthens Cabinet government by keeping the principal meetings clear of over-elaborate detail.

But none of these administrative arguments justify the two most conspicuous features of the system: its secrecy, and its entirely personal, autocratic nature. The ability to shuffle the pack of his colleagues without, for the most part, any effective scrutiny from party or public is obviously highly convenient for the Prime Minister and his official advisers. But amid the fantastic complexities of modern government – once again, his is the only machine which knows all that is going on – it makes him far more than the 'first among equals' of complacent constitutional history.

It exacerbates one of the natural dangers of our Cabinet system, which is that because the Prime Minister is the fount of all specific power, there is a tendency for the Cabinet to become a facade for one-man rule. And there is an awkward corollary to this: the less independence individual ministers have, and the less they have secure, acknowledged power-bases of their own, the less strength they can bring to the Prime Minister's aid if he happens to need it. But there is a simpler point which goes beyond this: today's Cabinet is a social and economic executive such as Gladstone never dreamed of. It can scarcely be acceptable for a body with such aspirations to keep the nature of its organisation secret.

Patrick Wintour: What the White Paper should have said

It says something for the lethargy with which the Government produced their official secrets reform this week that after two years' debate in cabinet committee Jim Callaghan and Merlyn Rees were still in the last two months contradicting each other on where the Government stands on the central principle of a Freedom of Information Act. The civil service for its part has been in disagreement with itself about whether it has even thought about the subject at all. Charles Morris, Minister of State at the civil service department says that Whitehall has sought to examine the Swedish and American experience of open government. Roger Darlington, political adviser to Merlyn Rees until last month, claims, however, in a letter to *The Times* that the civil service has not produced a single research document on the subject. Mr Rees's sloth is doubly revealing when you consider that there has been no pact hindering the reform – the Liberals have consistently criticised the narrowness of the Government's approach and pressed for a freedom of information bill.

That all that was missing was the political will has now been amply demonstrated by the number of groups, including the Liberal party and Justice, that have produced proposals. The major work, however, has been done by the Labour Party Machinery of Government Study Group and the independent Outer Circle Policy Unit. Their labours, reaching completion after a year, are in bill form; they amount to what the Government could and should been saying this week. Though they have produced very similar work – which is unsurprising in that they have been exchanging advice and advisers for the last six months – the Labour Party's is a little less restrained in its demands. Both groups have put their research into bill form to show the civil service that it is practicable to put open government into legislative form and also to ensure that any statute is kept as far as possible from the watery pens of the civil service. Though couched in legal terminology about xerox machines these draft bills take us a little of the way to a democratised state; it is intended to enforce the necessary legislation on a Labour government by 1980. The Bill would be in force by 1982.

Labour's Bill would not merely apply to central government but to local government, the nationalised industries, the National Health Service, the universities and polytechnics. However not all these public bodies would face the public gaze immediately. The Bill would come into effect in stages. The reformer's ambitions also stretch not merely to documents (defined as collated information) but also uncollated information. This would imply that information including statistics stored in computers, visual data units or on tape recorders would also made available. All these documents or bits of information, even those exempted from public disclosure, would have to be placed on a national register or index along with a short working title, thereby making it possible for the general inquirer to find out what documents are available relevant to his needs. Much of the subordinate legislation, the departmental codes and manuals, that accompany a Bill would have to be actually published and not merely placed on a file for inspection.

Outer Circle admit that all this would be expensive but point out that the civil service – for one concerned with this problem – have made no research into the cost of the American and Swedish legislation or to the extent to which their administration can usually be compared with Britain's. It is notoriously difficult to make estimates of such future costs. The US presidential executive office, for example, predicted that the American Privacy Act of 1974 would cost $300m; it ended up at a tenth of that, while their actual Freedom of Information Acts costs £10m. a year. One Roger Darlington estimate is that equivalent British legislation might cost initially £5m. more than that. But at present there are 12,000 information officers operating in British government dispensing information the Government want the public to receive and protecting the information the Government want to hide. A large number of these people could be transferred to working in the libraries and on the indexing that will be necessary under the new legislation. The final cost to the Treasury would depend on what level of charges the Departments would ask for the use of their library facilities and also, obviously, upon the level of demand.

Retrospective legislation drawing in the last 30 year's worth of documents (after which time the Public Records Office takes over) would also make the exercise more expensive. Outer Circle seem, apart from the cost, uncertain of the ethics of retrospective legislation. The Labour Party, however, would probably ask for the files on the last 30 years to be opened up in five year phases.

Probably the deepest divisions among the reformers has developed over the status of civil service advice. If this too was revealed it would certainly destroy the tradition of civil service anonymity and perhaps the myth of civil service neutrality, two major cornerstones of British government. The open government lobby agress that no policy advice by individual civil servants should be released before a decision has finally been made on the issue though that begs the question of whether is is possible to define legally the point at which a decision has been made. But some reformers go on to say that ministerial accountability would be reduced if individual civil servants were named, besides making the same servants more reserved in their advice. Against that others argue civil servants leak documents at present when it suits them, for example recently over armed forces pay and over Meriden's accounts; they often write documents to suit their Minister's preconceptions. Most of that moribund tradition would have to go if their work was open to analysis from interested academics and pressure groups. In Sweden where the civil service policy advice has always been open to scrutiny it has not produced a muffled cowed bureaucracy, merely a more efficient one.

There is less disagreement about the privacy of a departmental minister. Practically everything that is sent to a Minister or emanates from him that is not of a personal or party political nature would be immediately stamped and passed into the national register. Indeed even this limited privacy was questioned by one of the reformers who argued that a Minister was never a person but always a public figure.

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Tribune's government 'insiders': l. to r. Foot, Booth, Silkin, Orme, Hart, Huckfield.

Christopher Hitchens: The Tribune Group goes missing

Does the Tribune Group really exist? It may seem a cruel and unusual question, but recent observation has led one to doubt whether there really is an organised Left in the Parliamentary Labour Party. And now some academic research has confirmed what many of us long suspected. The paragon of the Left, the bogeyman of the Right – *ca n'existe pas.* Conservative Central Office have picked too frail a figure to support the weight of their wild allegations.

Looked at in one way, the figures are impressive. Nearly one quarter of Labour MPs can be accused of membership. So can four members of the Cabinet, thirteen other members of the govenment and nine PPSs. On the National Executive, the vigilant observer can count eight Tribunites. In local parties and trade unions the tally is not insignificant either. But the question must be asked: would it make any difference if the Group had not proclaimed itself at all?

John Burrow, a research student at the University of Essex, has done some excellent work on the voting patterns of the Tribune Group since the present government was formed. From that date in October 1974 until the summer recess in July 1977, Tribune members on average only voted with the group for 49 per cent of the votes. If we take whipped votes on their own, the figure falls to 43 per cent.

When it comes to that well-known set-piece, the rebellion (and have you noticed how rebellions are always 'staged' when they appear in the press?) the record is even more tame. Only *one per cent* of the group voted for all Tribune revolts, and six per cent of them did not vote for even one of these daring exercises.

So votes in favour of the group are difficult enough to find on a consistent basis. There is no such difficulty in finding votes against. On average, the members of the Tribune faction voted against the declared policy of their group for *twenty per cent* of the votes under consideration. Only six per cent (or five members) never voted against Tribune policy. The proportions enlarge when only whipped votes are considered. Here twenty-six per cent of Tribune members manage to defy the iron Stalinist discipline and vote against the line. Two particularly promiscuous MPs voted against the group for between *eighty and ninety per cent* of the votes, while twenty-one per cent of the group defied its policy for over fifty per cent of the whipped votes.

Things cheer up a bit for what Michael Foot once called 'the open conspiracy' when it comes to unwhipped votes. Recovering their courage, Tribune members managed to support up to sixty-four per cent of their own policies, while opposing themselves in only four per cent. Unsurprising, on the whole, that in the relevant period there were only three successful Tribune revolts (or six per cent if you prefer). There were, in any case, only five per cent of all divisions between 1974 and 1977 on which Tribune rebels could be counted at all.

This evident lack of muscle in the division lobbies is not belied by Tribune's performance as a general focus of opinion and ideas. Meetings on the old Monday routine (four of the clock in Committee Room 8, and don't be late) were attended by five or ten to twenty or thirty on important occasions. Since the switch to Thursdays, some spectacular single figures have been achieved.

Tribune certainly can't be accused of a grey conformity. Its membership hold views as diverse as the remainder of the PLP. Some spokesmen claim that there is more or less common ground between them on the 'Alternative Strategy' published in *Tribune* on 29 October 1976. Yet on the centrepiece proposals of that strategy – import controls – there is a clear division between the Right and Left wing members of the group, and between those who are in and out of the government. The whole idea that Tribune, for all its failure in the lobbies, is a force behind the arras comes under strain here. Apart from a few procedural victories in the debate on public expenditure cuts, they have no formal or informal change in Government policy which they can point to as their own. The defensive claim that 'It would have been a bloody sight worse without us' is not easily proved, though it makes for another interesting speculation. How much worse could things have been?

'Really, being a Tribunite is more a state of mind than a state of membership'. This comment from a veteran is indicative. There is probably no single proposition that unites the Group and several – notably the Middle East – which split it harshly.

On the Middle East, incidentally, and on Ulster, there is also a deep cleavage between what *Tribune* the paper says, and what Tribune the group will swallow. The same goes for reselection, an area where not every MP is an enthusiast. Many Tribune group members only joined to pacify their local parties anyway, and don't propose to make any further concessions.

Although Tribune has no formal discipline over its members (as Syd Bidwell found out when he signed the Select Committee report on immigration which vindicated Thatcher), it does sometimes summon the strength to behave like, say, a local council Labour Group. In the early days of the 1974 government, Tribune members made a fairly concerted attempt to take over the leadership of the many back bench committees which enliven the round of the rank and file MP. For a while they had some unopposed success, but the main consequence was the emergence of a right wing backlash, which mobilised the soft centre and left the committees even more in the hands of the loyalists than ever before. 'My comrades' said one Tribunite as he finished telling me this sad tale, 'are too ambitious when it comes to the small issues and too cautious when it comes to the major ones.'

It seems a fair epitaph. As the Conservatives prepare for a dirty election campaign, they have produced a list of alleged Marxist-Leninists in the PLP. It is one of the few really cheering things that has happened to the comrades for a while. Tribunites tend to get selected in marginal seats, so there may not be as many of them in the winter. But they will still be roaring like sucking-doves.

It may not be entirely fair to say that Tribune never makes any difference. In November 1972 they voted Reg Prentice into the Shadow Cabinet. He had the reputation for being anti-Common Market, which was thought to be good enough at the time (although nobody ever checked with him to find out). At all events, he was included on the Tribune voting ticket for the Shadow Cabinet elections and was amazed to find himself top of the list of twelve names. He had never even made it to number twelve before. The late John Mendelson almost resigned from the Tribune Group in disgust.

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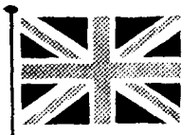

THE COMMUNISTS IN BRITAIN

Even at its peak in 1942 the British Communist Party membership did not exceed 50,000. The figure today is less than half that. Yet it is one of the most talked about - even feared - forces in British politics.

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Christopher Hird: British Gas leads Britain's state capitalists

Announcing profits of £180 million on Tuesday, British Gas kicked off the season of nationalized industry results. Before the end of next week, the Post Office, National Coal Board, Electricity Council and British Airways will unveil combined profits of around £500 million. But this is not half the story. These, the most profitable of the state owned firms, are generating a surplus of over £2,500 million, *after* paying interest on the loans which finance them. Their arcane accounting policies disguise the fact that the finances of three of the biggest are now so healthy, that government control over their activities is very much reduced.

If British Gas had drawn up their accounts for the year to the end of March on the same lines as three years ago, their profits would have been around £500 million. They have introduced three major changes to their accounting policies. First, the depreciation of plant and machinery is now calculated on the basis of how much it would cost to replace, instead of how much it cost to buy. Second, British Gas have decided to write off the value of old plant made redundant by North Sea gas, and the costs of converting to North Sea gas, in a shorter time than originally planned. Third, they have started to treat some investment as a running expense, instead of as a capital cost when the cost would have been spread over a longer period of time.

Although these accounting policy changes have reduced British Gas's disclosed profits, they have made no difference to their cash flow. In 1977/78, for instance, British Gas generated funds surplus to their immediate running requirements of £776 million, but needed less than £240 million for investment and financing their business. As a result they were able to repay almost £400 million to the government, years before it was due, helping to reduce their debts to the Department of Energy by two-fifths.

In other words, today's gas consumers are paying for all the Corporation's investment – from which future consumers will benefit and are also providing huge sums to reduce British Gas's borrowings. Private business would find it difficult to impose such policies on its customers which keep gas prices higher today than they would otherwise be.

A recent Price Commission report on the South of Scotland Electricity Board was very critical of a pricing system which made today's consumers bear the whole cost of capital investment. It also unearthed the fact that the SSEB was taking an extremely conservative view of the life of its assets. Much of its plant lasted 25 to 40 per cent longer than the SSEB assumed. Such pessimism may be more widespread in the nationalized sector. British Steel has recently reviewed its depreciation policies and discovered £312 million worth of assets, which had been completely written off, though still in use.

As all the nationalized industries aim to meet financial targets, the effect of such accounting prudence is to keep prices up. The Price Commission investigation of the SSEB discovered other ways in which this happens: all the costs of financing the construction of major power plants are borne by electricity consumers today instead of being capitalized and passed on to the consumers who will get the use of the electricity generated by that plant.

British Gas defends its conservative accounting policies in the following way. Today's gas consumers are benefiting from the very favourable contracts signed for the supply of gas from the southern basin of the North Sea before the oil crisis. Gradually this gas will be replaced by more expensive product from the Frigg and Brent fields. Last year, when these fields supplied about 7 per cent of the corporation's gas, the cost of gas supplies went up by almost two-thirds. Part of this increase was caused by revision of some of the southern basin contracts, but the Frigg and Brent Fields played their part. In the current year, about a quarter of supplies will be coming from these fields.

So, British Gas argue, they want to use the time the cheap gas has given them to write off as much as possible, make as big a provision for the future and repay as much of their debt as possible. In this way, price increases can be introduced more smoothly when gas supplies become more expensive. To help this strategy further they are cutting down the amount of cheap gas they buy now, so that its benefits will last longer.

In addition, as they start developing their own gas field in the Irish Sea – which could be half the size of the Frigg field – investment will rise and they will need to borrow money for this.

British Gas entirely reject the Price Commission's approach which, they say, just encourages concerns to borrow money to replace existing assets. The repayment of debt is good for the consumer in the long run because of the saving in interest charges: these were £50 million lower last year than in 1976/77 and will fall again this year. Sir Denis Rooke, British Gas chairman, challenges the whole philosophical idea of shoving costs into the future and wants to leave 'a national heritage of assets' for his children.

But he has been singularly unsuccessful in putting this message across. When cross-examined about British Gas's accounting policies on Tuesday, Sir Denis seemed to have some difficulty in keeping his temper, clearly resenting suggestions that he is fiddling the figures. When asked about the beach-head cost of gas from the southern basin – an important piece of information in judging British Gas's efficiency – he snapped 'No comment' and said it was one of the jobs of the outside directors to ask about this sort of thing. He dismisses the idea of including non-financial indicators of the Corporation's efficiency in the annual accounts. He claims that comparison with other countries' gas undertakings is not really feasible because none of them are integrated in the same way as British Gas. He complains that already British Gas have to produce much more detailed information than most companies in the private sector.

Sir Denis is by no means alone in his anxiety to distance himself from public control. When the National Economic Development Office prepared their study of the nationalized industries in 1976, virtually all the industry bosses asked for less government interference. An industry which can finance all its own investment, and repay money to the government, instead of borrowing from it, is in a much more independent position than, for instance, British Steel, the National Coal Board or British Rail – which receive large amounts of government money.

Over the last year, the government has been noticeably unsuccessful in putting up the price of gas - something which it considers important as part of its energy policy. They have lacked a major sanction in trying to impose this policy: control of British Gas's purse strings.

Their job has probably been made more difficult by British Gas's tendency to make more money than it expects. As the graph shows, British Gas's forecasts of their internally generated funds (profits plus depreciation) have been constantly revised upwards in the last two years. The forecast for the financial year which ends in March is made in the proceeding November. It is first published in the Government's Public Spending White Paper in January or February and then updated at the time of the Budget. The forecast for 1977/78 was revised upwards as British Gas realised interest charges would be much lower than expected,

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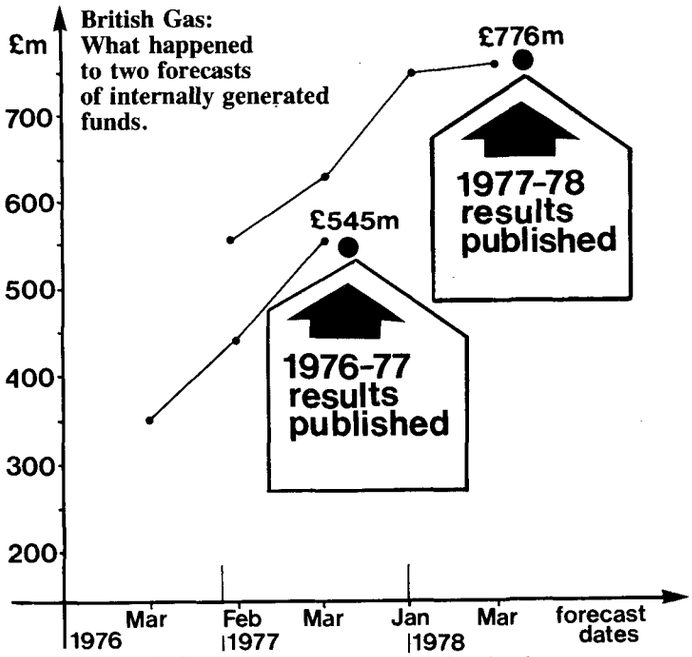

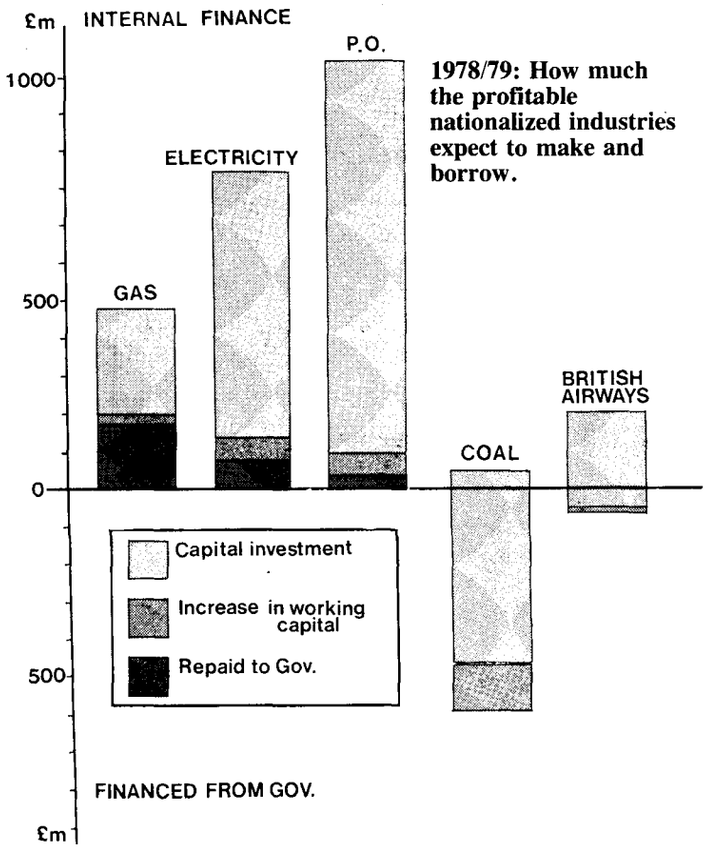

Above, British Gas's forecasting record in the last two years. Their financial years ends in March and the first forecast appears before the beginning of the year, following its preparation in the previous November. Right, each industries' forecast of how much finance they will need, and where it will come from in 1978/9. Internal finance is profits plus depreciation. Gas, Electricity and the Post Office all expect to make enough money to be self financing this year.

the expensive Frigg gas would arrive late and as the winter turned out more severe than expected. Already their forecast for 1978-79 of £470 million is beginning to look conservative and an outturn of £520 million seems more likely. As a result of exceeding their forecasts British Gas are well within their cash limit, which becomes irrelevant as a form of government financial control.

British Gas's aim is to make enough money to accumulate profits of around £600 million by 1981, when their assets will be worth about £2,400 million. They aim to do this by making a profit of 4 per cent on sales. Last year's £180 million profit represented a 7 per cent return – rather more than Sir Denis Rooke hinted at when he gave evidence to a House of Commons committee earlier this year. British Gas should have little problem in achieving their target.

And, as the chart above shows, both the Electricity Council and the Post Office are expecting to make themselves entirely self financing this year. The effect of such a development is to reduce the amount of public accountability and cement the establishment of a state capitalism. It is instructive that when Sir Denis Rooke spoke about his negotiations with the government over the early repayment of loans, he said he 'did a deal' with them. The deal involved repaying the government £93 million less than he owed; because interest rates had risen since the loans were issued, their notional capital value had fallen. Capitalism is full of people 'doing deals', and the state capitalists are no exception.

When Sir Frank McFadzean went from Shell to British Airways he found there was remarkably little difference between running the two concerns. In large public companies shareholders have stopped exercising any real control especially where most of the finance is generated internally. Only a fool ignores the government and the unions. Although Sir Frank had to deal with what he saw as problems of overmanning, these are not unique to the nationalised industries.

Neither the government nor the labour movement shows any sign of attacking this similarity. They are probably so relieved that the enormous losses of a few years ago are a thing of the past (with one significant exception), they do not feel like tackling the thorny problem of democratic control. But until they do, there is no reason for them to be any prouder of the state owned firms than they are of those in the private sector.

Gitta Sereny: Understanding the Hitlerwave

Since David Irving and his ludicrous Hitler thesis were unanimously rejected by the panelists at the recent Aschaffenburg Conference, his reputation, in Germany at least, has been irrevocably damaged. However, it would be according Mr Irving far too much importance to suggest that this was the Conference's main event.

The primary aim of the Conference was to discover what was most important to the understanding by future generations of the Hitler era: the *person* or the circumstances which produced him. This needs defining because the current *Hitlerwave* emanates from different needs and causes in Germany than it does elsewhere. It is caused not primarily by economic or political interests, but by curiosity.

Professor Albrecht Tyrell, historian of the University of Bonn, anatomised the error of historical 'explanations' which rely merely on the supposedly demonic personality of Hitler himself: he demonstrated, on the basis of his book *From Drummer into Führer* (which deals with Hitler's early years), that the dictator saw himself as a propagandist for some other to-be-found Führer. Only gradually, when the party dynamics were in the hands of others, claims Dr Tyrell, did he come to see himself as the future leader.

Professor J. P. Stern, a Germanist of London University, in a lecture based on his book *Hitler, the Führer, and the People* traced Hitler's rise, not to special qualities in Hitler the man, but rather to psycho-intellectual developments in 19th and 20th century German life, manifested at some times in literary works of supreme quality. He demonstrated what may well have been the true roots of the catastrophe: Germany possesses no traditions of individual freedom. According to Stern, Hitler appealed, both inside and outside Germany, not primarily to madmen or criminals, but to those holding the most traditional middle-class virtues of seriousness, devotion and resolution, and who were also deeply influenced by Romantic values, and susceptible to debased forms of Romanticism.

Stern's thesis was powerfully underlined by Hans Jurgen Syberberg's *Hitler, a Film from Germany*. This uses 450 literary, philosophical, political and theological quotes and requires viewers to measure themselves against infinite numbers of past and present forces in human existence in an effort to discover, not Hitler the man, but Hitler as a synonym for evil: provoked, accepted, maintained and supported in Germany and abroad.

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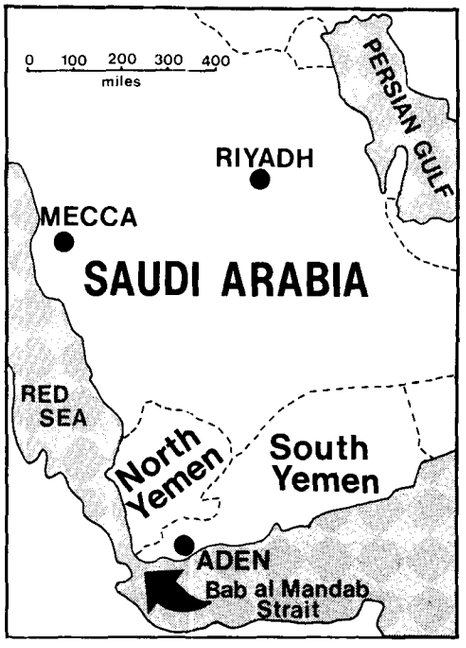
Richard Alexander: Saudi Arabia's enemies within and without



Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia was recently quoted as saying: 'We try to co-operate with all oil-consuming countries in the world so that there will be no suffering'. The morality of this characteristic remark contrasted with a statement by Amouzegar, the then Iranian Oil Minister: 'We sell oil to anyone who wants to buy it'. Wealth makes Saudi Arabia superficially the most stable nation on earth. It is the pillar of capitalism in a region where Marxism is spreading atomically. It could plunge much of the world into darkness by turning off its oil taps. It is not only the centre of pilgrimage for Muslims throughout the world, but it represents the purest form of Islam by virtue of its crusader Wahhabi dynasty. No division among its 5,000 princes has ever been exposed. When the collegiate of princes went into its Vatican-style cabal to discuss the succession after the assassination of King Faisal, it re-emerged with the choice of Khaled as if there had been no conflict, despite rumours of a power struggle. But events over the last year make it clear that severe social and political problems lie beneath the surface waiting to break.

Saudi Arabia is two peoples: about five million Saudis with their simple, bedouin-based culture and at least two million foreigners who are there, quite simply, to make money. There will be peace as long as the goals of neither community are threatened. The panic that reverberated from the ping-pong coups in the two Yemens showed how a tilting of the balance could threaten the fabric of the kingdom.

Nearly one million North Yemenis work in Saudi Arabia as third class citizens. Their plea that as Arabians they deserve to be treated as equals goes unheard. They live in appalling conditions because they are there to make money and send up 80 per cent of their earnings home. They live, often, in soap-box hovels dominated by imposing sky-scrapers. They don't complain. They are guest workers in a society of convenience where few have time for civil rights. But beneath this surface calm there are movements that some leading Saudis and Yemenis had long foreseen. The radical Marxist coup in South Yemen has led to fears that its brutally efficient cell system may have infiltrated throughout North Yemen and thence to Saudi's 'guest workers'.

The lauding in the Saudi press of the assassinated North Yemeni President Ghashemi as a hero of Arab unity was a sinister symptom of the current preoccupations. Very few people doubted Ghashemi's complicity in the murder of his predecessor, the beloved Hamdi, eight months previously. But Saudi Arabia's understandable fear of Communism has led it to over-ride personal realities. Neither the kingdom's past support for Haile Selassie, nor its aid to the Christian regime in Chad square up with its role as Defender of the Faith, but it is uncomfortably aware of its need to make ambiguous alliances against Marxism.

Linked with this threat is the corrosive influence of western materialism. Forty years ago the kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established by Ibn Saud as a theocratic state that enshrined the perfection of Islam. It represented a reformation in which justice and morality ruled according to a strict interpretation of the Koran. Shrines were destroyed; the Prayer was enforced five times a day by *muttawas* or religious police; Koranic penalties which disgust the West today were carried out diligently.

The massive influx of greedy foreigners has struck at the roots of the Wahhabi Revolution. The resulting 'pray by day and play by night' attitude has created psychological tensions among the Saudis that horrify the pious and pragmatic alike. Executions, publicised in the English-language press, have been stepped up to match the increasing occurrence of murder and rape. Both are still novelties by virtue of their rarity. The *muttawas*, almost benign a year ago, today enforce the closure of shops at prayer-time severely. Many a time in recent months have I had to hide in the shadows with a manager afraid of losing his licence on hearing the shouts of the ragged *muttawas*: 'Close the shops! Pray, pray!' Women are now allowed neither to enter nor leave the kingdom alone.

The histories of Saudi Arabia and the oil era are nearly synonymous. When the kingdom was founded in the 1920's, it was as isolated from the outside world as Tibet. This veil of secrecy was suddenly ripped off by the discovery of large quantities of oil during the reign of Ibn Saud's incompetent successor, Saud. Faisal, who replaced Saud, transformed a bankrupt treasury into a flourishing one and remains, throughout the Arab World, the embodiment of the perfection of Arabism and Islam. His greatest achievements stemmed from his recognition that it was necessary to control development so that it would neither corrupt his people nor outpace their abilities to take an active role in it. He believed that Islam and progress were reconcilable. He outraged the ulena, the religious authorities, by calling for the education of women and commented when they complained about women's voices on the radio: 'You'll soon be seeing their faces on television.' Since Faisal's death, Marxism has begun to spread an uncomfortable web about the peninsula. Development has run apace and, so far, few Saudis are actively involved in it. Huge sums are spent on prestige buildings such as the controversial King Faisal Specialist Hospital which, though intended by Faisal for use by all, is monopolised by the rich. The lovely Ottoman buildings of Jeddah and mud palaces of Riyadh are daily victims of the bulldozer. Fortunes are made from the sale of land. Students at universities, equipped with the best facilities in the world, leave classes early to 'home in' on the profits of their family enterprises.

One of the most sensitive issues in Saudi Arabia today is that of citizenship. The Kingdom depends on immigrant labour. Prince-watchers now recognise a split between the technocrat princes who understand the urgent need to offer citizenship to Arab immigrants who decide to settle, and the reactionary school which is determined to preserve a pure Saudi monopoly.

Although there is no Left in Saudi Arabia, there is a growing liberal element among Saudis who, returning from Western universities, watch with horror as the scramble for money goes on and vital issues are neglected. They find themselves powerless to influence the movement or play any useful role. There is no political system outside the monarchy and no scope for social development because of the dominant Wahhabi ideology. Extreme contrasts make the news – like the sheik who leads a spartan existence in Riyadh for half of every week and jet-sets in Cannes for the other. How complicated for the Saudis that their economic miracle should have followed so closely on the heels of their puritan revolution!

Princess Mishra was a symbol of that dichotomy, dividing herself between the Latin liberty of Beirut and the veiled acquiescence of Jeddah. Saudi women dress in the height of fashion in their homes. For them the street is merely an invisible world they pass through to reach Piaget's or the Gazzah drugstore. They are forbidden to work outside the professions of nursing, teaching and the media. Until recently a blind eye was turned to the employment of foreign women outside these spheres, but the police have now taken to raiding foreign companies and fining them if they are found employing women on a casual basis.

The scales of reaction and progress swing up and down ungovernably. If you ban the things people can buy, the cancer grows secretly through the limbs while the body appears radiant. If you open the flood-gates, you destroy the theocratic rock on which Wahhabi Islam is based and threaten the society with a light too bright for the uninitiated.

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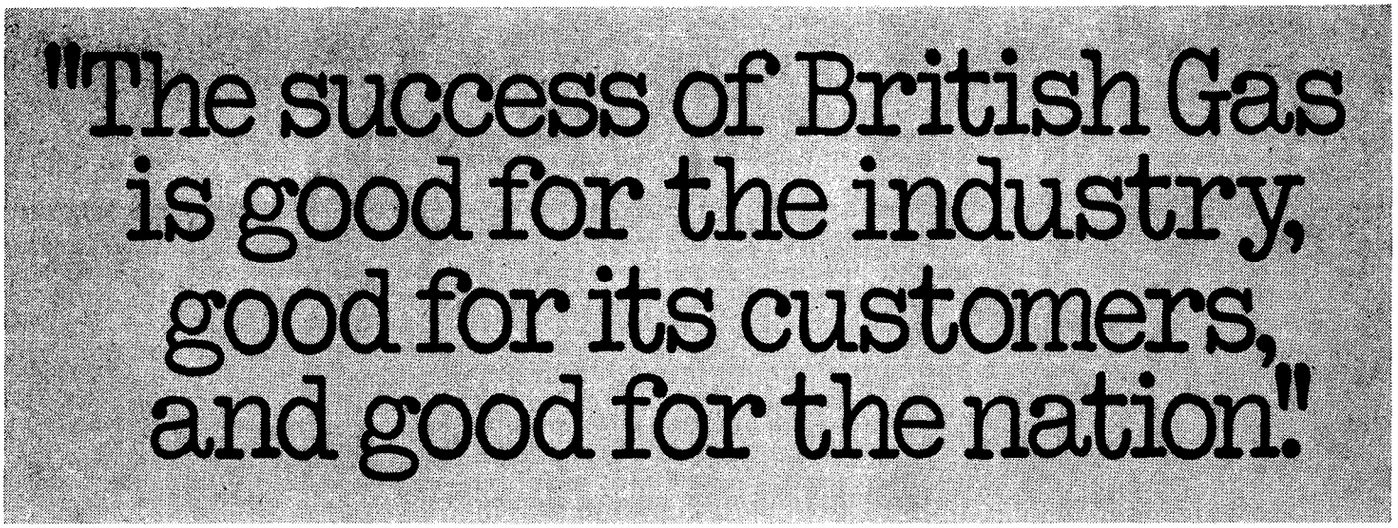

Sir Denis Rooke, Chairman of British Gas, reporting on the 1977/78 results.

Tariffs Unchanged.

Gas tariffs were last increased in April 1977. No increases are planned before 1st April 1979. So tariffs will have remained unchanged for two years by next April—a real help in keeping down the cost of living in 14 million households.

Share of Market Up

Gas now supplies 44% of all home heating needs and 26% of all industrial heating needs.

New Source of Supply

Frigg, the first of the northern North Sea gas fields, represents a substantial boost to available supplies.

Conversion Complete

The natural gas conversion programme—the biggest operation of its kind in the world—involving 35 million appliances—was completed on schedule, at a total cost of over £1,000 million (including the cost of plant retired early). This has been met by the industry without subsidy.

Customer Service Improves

The number of service jobs carried out rose by about 1 million to 14.1 million—27 a minute on average, and the Gas Consumer Councils report fewer complaints.

£500 million Borrowings Repaid

The industry was able to repay some of the heavy borrowings that were needed to finance natural gas conversion.

More than £500 million was repaid to the National Loans Fund, significantly reducing the public sector borrowing requirement and thus benefiting the nation as a whole.

Lower borrowing reduces interest charges, with permanent benefits to customers. In 1977/78 the interest burden was £47 million less than in 1976/77.

Pre-tax Profit–£180 million

This provides a much needed boost to the industry's financial reserves and will help to keep British Gas efficient and successful in the future.

Future Investment Plans

The industry's 5-year investment programme amounts to £1,600 million, covering exploration for and the development of new gas discoveries, extensions to the pipeline system, gas storage—and research and development in many key areas, including new methods of producing gas and the more efficient utilization of energy.

Gas gets on with it

BRITISH GAS

The above facts are taken from the British Gas Corporation's Annual Report and Accounts for 1977/78—available from HMSO.

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France in Europe and Africa: A new Holy Alliance?

France's African policy has recently been compared to Metternich's Holy Alliance. CLAUDE BOURDET, the distinguished French socialist who made the comparison, traces the development of his country's post-war foreign policy from slavish pro-Americanism through hawkish non-alignment to its present subservience to German interests in Europe and US interests in Africa.

From 1947 on, the foreign policy of the Fourth Republic was largely under American guidance. The same can be said, of course, of other Western European countries, but at some times, subservience was even greater in Paris. There was a saying then, that in most French ministries the usual reaction to a new problem was not to try to solve it, but to see what the Americans could do about it . . . The French managed to sell even their colonial policies to the Americans by insisting that they were defending the West against 'Communism'.

This policy of alignment with the US was accepted by the major part of the population: by the business community, by the Socialist party, which had broken with the Communists and got itself entangled in an 'anti-communist' war in Indochina in 1947; and by large sectors of the population that were frightened by the Communist takeovers in Eastern Europe and did not question that this was the beginning of a Soviet offensive for world domination.

De Gaulle himself used the Soviet bogey as a main prop during his campaign against the 'weakness' of the Fourth Republic in 1946-48. Whether this often cynical statesman believed in the Russian menace is another question. By the time of his return to power in 1958 his foreign policy became more and more bent on a kind of non-alignment, and there is no doubt that he considered excessive American influence as the main danger for Western Europe.

Though he greatly improved French relations with many more or less non-aligned nations, particularly in the Arab world, he apparently never thought it worthy of himself or of France, with which he identified himself in a weird, passionate way, to join the rather heterogeneous camp of non-aligned nations. He was fearful of European political integration, both because he felt that such a merger would destroy the essence of France – and because this would destroy any French independent policy without replacing it by an independent *European* policy. This was also the crux of his constant opposition to British membership of the Common Market.

This Gaullist foreign policy hardly met the feelings of the General's 'constituency'. He had been brought to power by the Right. He was unconditionally supported by the whole of the business community, and especially by Big Business, which found, in the Gaullist State, direct access to government to a point it had never enjoyed in France except under Napoleon III and under Pétain. Apart from the nationalist undertones which satisfied some right-wing politicians, de Gaulle's foreign policy had nothing to please these circles. They resented his quarrel with America. They saw their future, not in independence, but in their integration, even as minor partners, in the machinery of world capitalism. They therefore favoured European political unity because it could help this integration. However, they let de Gaulle have his way, because he was too strong, and they needed him. Besides, it was only for a few years . . .

After de Gaulle came Pompidou, himself a banker and a prominent member of the business community. He realised that de Gaulle's policy of independence was too ambitious, that it was not supported by French capitalism and that, if it were taken seriously, it would imply a different economic line: more planning, less free enterprise, changes in foreign trade. All this would be unacceptable to the right wing coalition which supported Pompidou. But having been a close associate of de Gaulle for many years, and realising the popularity of de Gaulle's foreign policy, not only with extreme nationalists, but with the population as a whole, he did not reject the former line outright, but tried to adapt it to a less ambitious view of France's possibilities. He did not bring the French military forces back into NATO, but he did stop antagonising the Americans. He helped to open the Common Market to Britain. The Mediterranean was the chosen area where Gaullist policy could still be applied. That meant continuing and developing French links with Algeria and the Arab countries, even supporting the PLO – up to a point – a policy which brought considerable rewards for French business. Pompidou's foreign policy reflected the duality in his own character. He was both a faithful Gaullist, and a businessman.

With Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, we have quite a different picture. Giscard himself is more a son of the Establishment. Pompidou became a businessman by accident, becoming associated with the Rothschild banking firm through his membership of de Gaulle's group of aides. Giscard is the son of a banker, Edmond Giscard d'Estaing, who used to be president of the Banque des Intérêts Français, and was also, during the last war, a member of the notorious 'National Council', Vichy's pseudo-Parliament chosen by Pétain. Through his wife, Giscard is related to the Schneider family of steel magnates. Gaullism meant little to him, although he started his political career under de Gaulle, and he has been active trying to erase as much as possible Gaullist influence and tradition from French politics.

So in the last few years, the main support for any even relatively non-aligned foreign policy came from the Left; the more so as the new Socialist party, under Mitterrand, had moved away from the extreme pro-American stance of the Mollet era. At the same time the French Communists, like their Italian and Spanish brothers were becoming more and more critical of the Soviet Union. When Giscard took over in 1974, he was assured of at least four years of parliamentary support; the 1978 elections were to give him an even more extended freedom of action. He quickly did away with the last remnants of de Gaulle's foreign policy. On Europe, he supported complete supra-nationalism.

He approved of the choice of the Belgian Prime Minister, Tindemans, to write the report on European union to the European Council in January 1976, and subsequently supported the Tindemans line, which goes a long way towards developing a supranational Europe by stages. He broke completely with the Gaullist strategy of considering the French nuclear *force de frappe* purely as a deterrent, to be used only in connection with French security. In his June 1976 speech to the Institute of Higher Defence Studies, he committed French nuclear forces to potential use in the framework of a common allied battle strategy in Europe.

It may appear of course normal that an eminent representative of Big Business in a country where the major industrial and financial firms have no desire for national autonomy, but are mainly intent in finding their place in the world structure of capitalism, should do away with all the (to his mind) irrelevant fixtures of the Gaullist version of non-alignment. However, the consequences of this choice were wider and deeper than the return to the American leadership of the 1948-58 era. In the past twenty years, American policy and the American view of the means to achieve it have changed, largely because of the Vietnam war. Already during the Nixon period, Kissinger developed the theory of 'relay-States': strong bulwarks of American power which could free the US from the need for direct military intervention. This view, of course, was not propounded systematically but haphazardly, in accordance with the Secretary of State's whims. However, David Rockefeller's Trilateral Commission took up the same idea in 1973 in a more rational form.

The very name of Trilateral is based on the idea that the supremacy of capitalism (or if you like, the 'defence of the Free World') relies on close cooperation between the United States, Western Europe and Japan. With Governor Carter chosen, groomed and helped towards the Presidency by the Trilateral Commission, and having, in return, chosen many of his aides from among its American members, it was clear that Trilateralism was going to dominate American foreign policy for some time to come.

'Europe', in Trilateral jargon, was little

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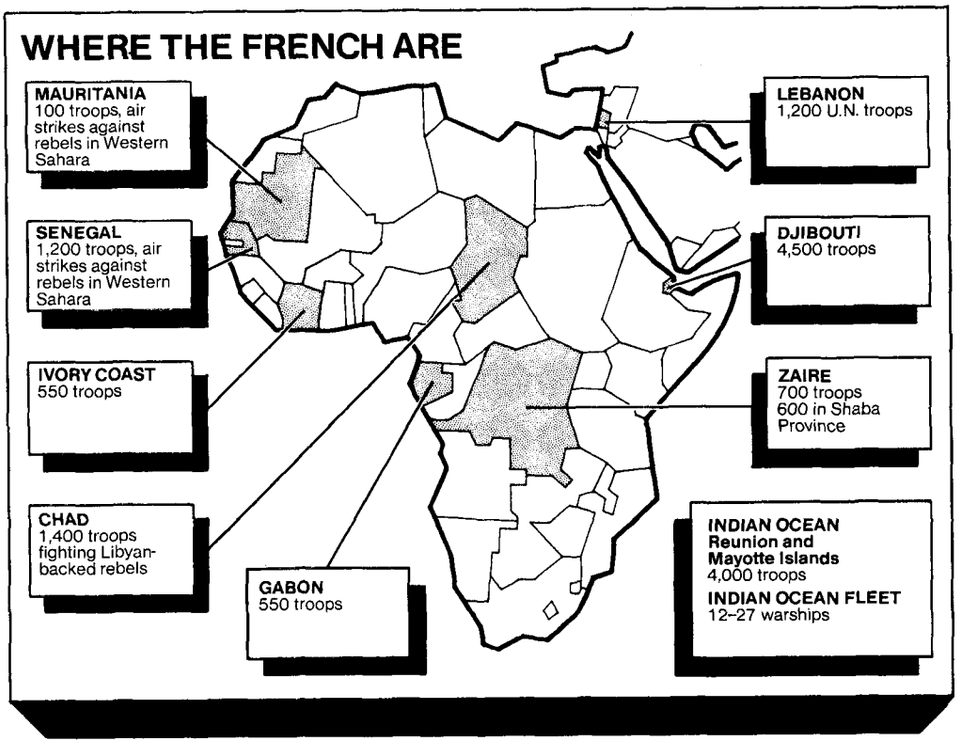
more than a euphemistic designation for the Federal Republic, the most powerful nation of Western Europe, and the main European connection of American business and military strategy. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing understands that re-establishing the closest links with the US meant accepting German supremacy in Europe. Giscard's economic policy was in line with this perspective; it is by no accident that he nominated as his prime minister Raymond Barre, an economist with very traditional 'free enterprise' ideas, and one of the French members of the Trilateral Commission. Barre's deflationary policy has been modelled on that of West Germany, and supported not only morally but financially by Chancellor Schmidt and the Bundesbank. Incidentally, this policy is rooted in the ideas of Milton Friedman, as adapted to Europe by Friedman's disciple, Karl Brunner.

The French government applied deflationary methods with a ruthlessness out of the reach of the British Labour government, or of an Italian leadership under the pressure of the *compromesso storico*. In France unemployment has reached a new peak, and many efficient firms are going bankrupt – mostly to the advantage of American and German multinationals. Friedmanism in an open area favours the stronger 'central' sectors at the expense of the periphery.

Giscard's pursuit of a supranational Europe is consistent with his acceptance of German primacy. The main German parties have supported European political integration from the very first. Willy Brandt demanded, last year, that the future European Parliament should have power to draft a European Constitution. Generally speaking, political integration, too, tends to strengthen the stronger, and weaken the weakest: as happened in the case of Italian integration after 1866, which destroyed the incipient industry of the Mezzogiorno, and was at least partly responsible for the state of underdevelopment which has plagued that part of the world until today. The Federal Republic will be able to influence developments, not only through its delegates to the European Parliament, but through the financial pressure of the Bundesbank. No left-wing majority will be possible, because the SPD will resist the inclusion of French and Italian communists, and Helmut Schmidt and his friends will join hands with social democrats from the other countries of Northern Europe, and with the conservatives of all EEC countries, to prevent any communist participation in government in Paris and Rome. That will keep the French and Italian conservatives in power for the foreseeable future. The scene is now being set for a German-American Europe: more German, indeed, than American.

Giscard's African policy is closely related to this scheme. German primacy in Europe may gradually disturb French opinion, and hurt French business interests. Finding an African role for France could be psychologically and financially rewarding. Schmidt, like Bismarck, thinks it is a good idea to get France busy in Africa so that it lets Germany manage Europe. He also knows that France has more experience in handling Africa and will not hesitate to get her hands dirty. On 7 April, at the meeting of the European Council in Copenhagen, Schmidt nicely said that 'France, for historical reasons, has a large and precious experience (of the Third World) which should be saved and used in the interest of all Europe'. (An 'experience' which the Vietnamese and Algerians, among others, appreciate.) This comes at a time when the United States is of two minds regarding its African policy; Zbigniew Brzezinski, the CIA and the Pentagon are ready to 'counter the Soviets' everywhere, which means supporting any anti-progressive force, as Kissinger and the CIA did in Angola at a time when the Russians and the Cubans were hardly present there. On the other hand, Vance and Andrew Young believe more subtly, as do other Western African experts, that Africa is not ready for Communism, and that the best thing is to leave the continent alone and let the African nations learn their own lessons, as many of them have indeed already done.



Giscard's African policy fitted with the American hawks' posture, and not with that of the doves. But this very duality gave him elbow-room. Already, in March 1977, the Franco-Moroccan intervention in Zaire came at a time when the State Department was asking itself about General Mobutu: about his bloodcurdling ruthlessness, his unpopularity and finally his weakness. The 1977 propping up of the Mobutu regime set the model for the May 1978 intervention of French and Belgian troops – where the Belgians followed the French lead. A dominant factor again was Schmidt's position: he has constantly played the American hawks against the doves, for instance on the neutron bomb and on the Cruise missile. Moreover, there was a danger that any replacement of Mobutu in Zaire would threaten the strange deal by which the Kinshasa dictator has leased to a German semi-State corporation, OTRAG, a huge territory inside Shaba (about half the area of Great Britain) in order to test German missiles. These may be nuclear missiles, possibly 'Europe' Cruise missiles.

Although the French have consistently supported conservative regimes inside the former French African empire, and intervened militarily to protect their weaker puppets, the Zaire intervention was the first outside France's traditional African precincts. This has raised many questions in France. In Africa, it has mounted anger, even in countries like Tanzania that are not 'left-wing'. It destroys the image of France as 'the friend of the Third World' which de Gaulle had managed to establish, and Pompidou to prop up, despite continual meddling in the affairs of 'French' Africa, and sales of every possible armament to South Africa. But it is clear that this policy has come to stay, as long anyhow as the Giscard régime remains in place. It will enjoy West German support for all the reasons mentioned above, and it will make use of Carter's hesitations to create *faits accomplis* which will validate the Brzezinski line. The proposal, suported by the most unpalatable of French puppets, to create an African intervention force trained and advised by the Germans and the French, a kind of vicarious European intervention force, aimed at making Africa 'safe for capitalism' – points in this direction.

In a recent article in *Le Monde*, I compared this African policy to Metternich's Holy Alliance of autocrats at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which was supposed to maintain the monarchical status-quo in Europe, and which for some time, succeeded in doing so. The question arises: isn't it a bit late for Metternich, in Africa or elsewhere?

Claude Bourdet was one of the founders of the Unified Socialist Party (PSU). During the war he was a member of the National Council of the Resistance, and survived deportation to Buchenwald. He was the first editor of Combat, *and of* L'Observateur. *He was a leading opponent of the Algerian war, and has championed the anti-colonial cause in France for many years.*

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London Diary

☐ The news that 800 students had been transported to Baguio City with instructions to breathe deeply for several hours to test the temperature for the world chess championships reminded me that no-one talks much about the Philippines. It took a musician friend two weeks to get over a severe bout of cross-cultural neurosis brought on by a recent visit. He was particularly intrigued by President Marcos' wife, Imelda (a former beauty queen known as F.L. – First Lady). She is renowned for her love of the arts. Questioned as to why she was spending so much when many of her subjects were dying of hunger, she neatly replied 'But the Philippine people are starved of culture.'

The concert hall was almost empty when he started his recital. By the end, it was packed by those who, hastily summoned by F.L., feared for their lives. The banquet was equally unnerving. Seated near the President, my friend glanced over at one of the documents brought for signature. It read 'Sentenced to Death'. Marcos signed it and continued happily with his minestrone.

Nor does Imelda limit herself to the arts. Supported by funds from America, anxious to retain its presence there, she recently offered 50m dollars towards the cost of holding the next General Assembly of the UN in Manila. Waldheim, General Secretary of the UN, asked her over to New York to discuss the matter. 'Oh God', she was heard to reply, 'I'll have to talk to all those Arab heads of blocs and things.' She also has a profound knowledge of musical instruments. 'I was in Peking and, do you know, they make grand pianos there now? I bought two and sent one to van Cliburn.' Suggestion to Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber: 'Imelda'?

☐ Marxist seminars are this century's equivalent of temperance rallies, both run by the bourgeoisie for the enlightenment of a working class which isn't listening. It was reassuring to find that the tenth Communist University of London still provides a haven for the left wing at Central London Polytechnic (the LSE, of course, has turned Genghist). Anxious to demonstrate that Marxism can cope, this nine-day wonder has promoted to academic status the most amazing topics. One course even promised to examine, under the heading *Black Music in White Society*, the extent to which such music helps to resist 'white hegemony and racism'.

Professor Eric Hobsbawm, the Marxist historian (dissidents prefer to describe him as a novelist) argued that the movement was far too middle-class; indeed, he found that the current burgeoning of 'Marxist metaphysics' had nothing to do with the world except to provide material for other Marxists to discuss at seminars. The students I talked to lent weight to his thesis. Though formidably ragged, the myopic all wore private as opposed to NHS spectacles – an infallible guide to middle-class membership. One girl, preparing a dissertation on the State and Euro-Communism, had already decided to resign from the 'spineless' Labour party in favour of Communism – though not going so far as to join the SWP which she found 'absolutely nutty – still going on about Trotsky's death.'

Significantly, the only fully-subscribed courses were *The Sexuality of Power, Sex and Class, City and Politics*, and *An Introduction to Marxism*. Could it be that the middle classes are waking up to what it's all about? There are still difficulties, even should they absorb the lessons contained in *Abandonment of Critical Philosophy*. As Professor Hobsbawm pointed out, the average *Guardian* reader today faces almost insurmountable problems when confronted by the activities of left wing terrorists.

☐ Workers, except in a menial capacity, were also absent from the twelfth-year reunion of Bunnies on Sunday night. 'I was going to come by helicopter', one gilded youth apologised, 'but we decided to hire a Daimler instead.' Though modestly dressed in a black tee-shirt, Victor Lownes, who makes about, it is said, £1m a year from his activities as Playboy magnate, had spared no (tax-deductible?) expense in celebrating at his country home near Tring (a former girls' public school) the enormous contribution of Bunny girls to his own, and the country's economy. There were lavish buffets, a firework display and naked orgies in the indoor pool (I made an excuse and jumped in). There was even the Band of the Coldstream Guards, but it stopped playing in disgust at the appearance of two marching infants, dressed half-Bunny, half-Coldstream. Helicopters kept on depositing what I was told were famous people, but I had lost my spectacles, so failed to recognise anyone of note.

Bunnies are not worried about their role as sex objects. 'I believe in Women's Liberation', averred Caroline, 'but I think if a girl can make money this way, that's the most liberating thing in the world.' They are not particularly highly-paid. After intensive training at the gaming tables, relaxing only for quick dips in Mr Lownes's pool (carefully-positioned underwater lighting and even more strategic jets of subsurface hot water) they can expect little more than £85 a week – less than a top temp. Their lives, at least as Bunnies, are short. Lolita, aged 30, became a Bunny at the age of 20, much to the disgust of her family, and having qualified as a nurse. 'It *is* a very young woman's job, but I don't regret it. If men can sell something by using a beautiful woman, then why not?' She now lives on supplementary benefit. Despite this butterfly-short career, there is no shortage of recruits. Gentlemanly Mr Lownes ('Let me get you an ashtray – you're drunk', he said, with a debonair lurch) is obviously set for a prosperous future, whatever the state of the economy.

☐ Carmen Callil, of feminist Virago Press, was startled recently by a call from Cannon Row police station. Had she recently published a book about the Suffragist movement, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*? Had she, in addition, advertised the publication? If so, the police took a very dim view of the fact that Mrs Pankhurst's statue in Victoria Tower Gardens had been daubed with the names of three rather obscure Suffragists mentioned in the book. Yes, Miss Callil admitted, she had published the book and, as was normal in that business, had actually advertised it, though she knew nothing about the desecration of the statue. Questioned, the beat crimes officer at Cannon Row was distinctly peeved. 'It's cost the ratepayers £38 to clean it off. *You* might not mind that, but to me it's vandalism.' After some discussion, the police have decided not to take action. 'We don't know who did it,' they say disarmingly.

☐ Caxton Hall has witnessed many bizarre occasions. None, however, has quite matched that of Sir Keith Joseph confessing to a meeting of the Greater London Conservative Political Committee last Saturday that he had made serious mistakes in his restructuring of the NHS while Minister of Health in the early Sixties. His audience, though rather bored with the continuing confessions designed to distance himself from his erstwhile leader, Edward Heath, took it patiently. 'Dear old Keith', one future Euro-MP muttered, 'he wears a marvellous line in hair-shirts'; to which a fast-greying young hopeful replied, 'Yes. But he keeps his silk vest on underneath.'

☐ Asians, they say, are the Jews of the twentieth century. Using unfair methods like working hard and keeping their shops open as late as they keep their prices high, they stand accused of making a decent living. No native-born Englishman, however, would be up to the kind of personal service recently offered to a friend in Kentish Town. Anxious to read an overlooked book review, he asked for a copy of the previous day's *Times*. 'Certainly, Sir,' the Indian newsagent replied. Suspecting a profitable English eccentricity, he then solicitously enquired, 'Shall I keep a copy of today's *Times* for you to pick up tomorrow?'

Ruth Hall

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Mr Nicholas Fairbairn, Conservative MP for Kinross and West Perthshire, said yesterday: 'The first tailor I ever went to told me to judge a man by his shoes and that is still true. That is why those who do not wear shoes that are polished and bright are dim wits and slubberdegullions.'–*D. Telegraph* (Brenda Rowe)

☐ St. Fagans area. Modern detached four-bedroomed house. Magnificent views of country and St. Fagans village. Lounge/picture window, open plan pine stairs. Large garden. Near schools, shops. Suit consultant, senior civil servant or union leader. £28,750. – *Western Mail* (E. M. Yonge)

☐ Readers of the *Yorkshire Evening Post* who enter its bingo competition must answer questions to demonstrate skill. An example: 'How many months in a year?' – *Guardian* (R. A. Legge)

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

Of Cabbages and Kings

As one grows older, the weekly supply of what the King in *The King and I* referred to as 'puzzlements' seems ever to increase. In youth, so occupied was one with algebra, tennis, irregular verbs (and what a beast *aller* was), halma, history and the unlovely Diet of Worms that the endless extraneous puzzlements of life that doubtless then existed, passed one by. Not so now. I read recently in a popular daily of the police stopping in Regent Street a motor-bicyclist who, on his 150 cc (whatever that may mean) scooter was transporting, in addition to himself, 112lb of potatoes, 35lb of cabbages and 36lb of other vegetables. The police objected to the weight of all this. The fact that the man also had on board a parrot in a cage is really neither here nor there weight-wise. The skilful rider does not seem to have fallen off or scattered cabbages about and forbidden access to the Café Royal so why the fuss? Hauled up before a magistrate who 'was hardly able to restrain his mirth', the mobile leguminist was, ha-ha, fined, ho-ho, the considerable sum of £50. The vegetables' destination (they came from Hampstead) was not mentioned but it seems to me possible that it was, as I shall explain later in one of this piece's further puzzlements, Downing Street.

But what now? Where do I, indeed, go from here? Suppose that I wish to get out, pump up and dust down my bicycle (self-propelled and no cc rubbish for old-stagers like me), fill its bicycle basket with heavy (in weight) books from Great Turnstile, with, say, my week's washing strapped to the rear bracket and then pedal my way out of WC1 and into WC2 and the Strand. How on earth am I to tell whether the police will consider me over-loaded? Where to find any information on the subject? Is there, on the topmost shelf of a remote government department, somebody's life's work enshrined in a neat pamphlet entitled *Henderson's Scale of Acceptable Loads for Push-Bicyles in Large Cities*? If it exists, perhaps an exceptionally civil servant will send me a copy.

And before I pass on to, indeed, weightier matters, a warning word about parrots. When people die, their wills invariably go wrong or cause unforeseen complications and, though my father's will seemed clear as day, it contained a difficulty. We had at home, inherited from my grandmother, a grey parrot of great age called Bobby. Somewhere along the line, somebody had taught him to say 'Enjoying yourself?' in a markedly perky and sneery manner, together, alas, with 'How are your bowels?' for which he employed a more solicitous tone. Visitors thus addressed found each remark disconcerting. He much enjoyed music and had quite a repertoire but he was unfortunately tone-deaf and could effortlessly manage two or three changes of key in a piece as short as Pop Goes the Weasel. He would have been quite at home among the modish modern dissonances relayed at off-peak hours by Radio 3.

In his will, and more or less as a joke, my father bequeathed the parrot (with other things) to the maid who had tenderly looked after it and to whom, as to all of us, it was devoted. The legal minds then got to work and before probate could be completed, my mother was pestered with endless queries. What was the value of the parrot? By that time, Bobby had, like many another, pulled out all his breast feathers and presented a scraggy bare bosom to the world. He had also developed a loud cackle (possibly caught from me), lived on grilled bacon and peas and not even the neediest zoo would have given him house room. My mother replied that the parrot's value was to us, limitless, but negligible otherwise. No good, and back they came. 'What would the bird fetch at auction?' The conception of Bobby on a stand at Sotheby's enquiring after Peter Wilson's bowels we found highly diverting. Eventually, Bobby was mentally knocked down by us at a fiver, after which the keen legal minds brought themselves to bear on the value of Bobby's cage.

I am shortly coming again to that motor-bicyclist, but via Cambridge. As an undergraduate, I had rooms in a fairly large and very attractive (Queen Anne, I suppose) house conveniently situated at the back gate of my own college, Christ's. Three other undergraduates lived there too and one of them was, to me, a slightly raffish and worldly character who did no visible work and who ran, if that be the verb, a pack of beagles, dogs which appeared to venture forth in yelping search of whatever it was mainly in the winter months. He did not actually bring the beagles into our communal lodgings but he did what I suppose he considered to be the next best thing and brought along his fellow-beaglers. On chilly afternoons and just as dusk was falling, they would pour, steamy and exhausted, up to the first floor and, after a short pause, their leader would come to the head of the stairs and call politely down to our housekeeper, 'Miss Lumley, may we please have tea for 18.'

Is this, I wonder, what our prime minister gets up to in Downing Street? I long, don't you, to know exactly what goes on domestically behind the door of Number 10. Is there some tremendously competent lady superintendent who takes charge ('Oh and by the way, Mrs Rackstraw, we shall be 54 for dinner')? As you know, I keep, unmindful of the effort and concentration involved and my only reward the frequently expressed gratitude of readers, a pretty sharp eye on what goes socially on chez the Callaghans, as far as it is reported in the public prints. I did not write that figure 54 at random. I see that the PM, hospitably inclined on the evening of 10th July, gave a dinner for just that number. Sexist too, I much fear, and only chaps present. Mr Healey found time to come along, together with sixteen other M.Ps, one peer, twelve Sir Somebody Somethings, a Dr or two and a generous sprinkling of, to me, unknowns, all of them intent, I imagine, on the enjoyable business of munching their hearts out.

Who can doubt that our motor-bicyclist was hastening thither with his loyal and plentiful tribute of veg, and of what did the evening's menu consist? Does Mrs Rackstraw feed the numbers, names and social grades of the guests into a giant computer which then hiccoughs out suitable food suggestions. Only one Lord present, you note, so it can hardly have been a smoked salmon affair. I seem to see grapefruit. What then? Toad-in-the-hole? I hardly think so. Labour MPs have by now, I suspect, left such pleasant things far behind.

A final puzzlement, and governments who become increasingly impertinent about enquiring into the personal affairs of private individuals must sometimes take a little of their own medicine. If it was not just a private treat for 54 persons, who paid for this beano? Who set it up? How much did it cost? What of true benefit to the country emerged from all this tra-la-la? I am not suggesting that no benefit came. I am merely asking what. If, sir, you write to me about it, pray use a 9p stamp. Your monopoly P.O., in addition to purposely delaying 7p letters, has now, in my case at least, started to lose some of them too.

Roger Woddis

Human Rights?

Janus Hardback, the novelist,
Winced as he read the news,
Came out in spots and sympathy
With dissidents and Jews.

Here he was, free and flourishing,
There were they in chains;
And the blood of his righteous anger
Coursed through his velvet veins.

He cancelled lunch with his agent,
The commissioned novel could wait;
There were letters to august journals
And a TV spot at eight.

Janus looked up at the limelight

And said, 'Does anyone care
That frightful things are happening
To people over there?'

He wrote and spoke and thundered,
And he hoped his words would fly
To the cold of a distant prison
From the warmth of his cushioned sty.

He wept to think of their courage,
Of the steadfast faith of the few;
His books sold by the million,
But he was human too.

He tried to forget, though vainly,
That he who was so prone
To salute the balls of freedom
Had once cut off his own.

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Letters to the Editor

The Mask of Moscow

Sir, It is possible that your leader (NS 14 July) on the current trials in the Russian empire is needlessly negative on what we can do to counter such tyranny *now*. The fact that the frontiers of the subject peoples of Russian imperialism are often contiguous with those of the ruling power has helped to conceal the realities of their true status. Despite all its shrill clamour on colonialism Russia itself is in fact the last of the great European colonial hegemonies, and the cause of colonial freedom for its victims has yet to find the kind of champions who were so conspicuous during the independence struggles of the subject peoples of Asia, Africa and elsewhere.

The manner in which *millions* of Russia's victims did not hesitate to make common cause even with the Nazis in an attempt to destroy the grip of their colonial masters during the Hitler war (just as leaders of the Indian independence movement sought to make common cause with the Japanese to defeat British imperialism) is an indication of the deep currents which are running so strongly and with such determination behind the international blanket of Russian lies and deceit. This is the soft underbelly of Russian oppression and any who profess a concern for freedom ought now to make common cause with the numerous independence movements of the subject peoples of sovietism until they achieve victory.

JOHN PAPWORTH

24 Abercorn Place
London NW8

Comparability with what?

Sir, Your cover article (NS 7 July) confirms my belief that the private sector is getting too much, not the public sector too little. Both sectors could reflect on what R. H. Tawney had to say in *Acquisitive Society* nearly 60 years ago:

'No one has any business to expect to be paid "what he is worth" for what he is worth is a matter between his own soul and God. What he has a right to demand and what it concerns his fellow-men to see that he gets, is enough to enable him to perform his work. When industry is organised on a basis of function, that, and no more than that, is what he will be paid.

To do the managers of industry justice, this whining for money is a vice to which they (as distinct from their shareholders) are not particularly prone. There is no reason why they should be. If a man has important work and enough leisure and income to enable him to do it properly, he is in possession of as much happiness as is good for any of the children of Adam.'

S. G. DIXON

7 Elm Grove
North Harrow, Middlesex

Wilson and Pencourt and Curran

Sir, Lest any of your readers should be misled by the letter from Pencourt (NS 14 July) I should wish formally to record as a fact that I neither gave nor authorised any instruction to them to record conversations with Sir Harold Wilson, except for material which he might have been willing to give for use in a programme. If the suggestion is that they surreptitiously recorded conversations with him, it should be known that such recording would have been strictly against specific instructions which had permanent force in my time as Director-General. Any departure from this practice would have required explicit authorisation by me, and I gave no such authorisation to Pencourt. Had I known that they were engaging in surreptitious recording, I should immediately have forbidden it.

CHARLES CURRAN

Broadcasting House
London W1

Bitterness over Biafra

Sir, Before accusing me of 'stirring up bitterness over the Biafran War' I do think that Ruth Hall (London Diary, 7 July) might have read the book I was reviewing. If she had she would have found that Mr Stremlau, in a notably impartial and copiously documented study of the facts, had disproved the accusation of genocide. In addition he shows that even the inventors of the story had given it up before the end; on p. 328 he quotes Mr Uche Chukwumerije, the Biafran Director of Propaganda, as admitting that by 1969 'our propaganda was getting nowhere . . . the threat of genocide was no longer credible and simply not true.'

I don't see why it should be called stirring up bitterness for me to point out, and to show where the indisputable evidence can be found, that things were nothing like as bad as many people believed at the time. It would be more natural to think that the effect would be to reduce bitterness.

DAVID HUNT

Old Place – East Wing
Lindfield, Sussex

The Bloomsbury mantelpiece

Sir, If I had realised that this mantelpiece was going to become such a cliff-hanger and to consume so much of your valuable space, I would have written earlier to explain matters.

When I was gathering material for the life of Virginia Woolf I came across a letter in which she wrote: 'I still shiver with shame at the memory of my half-brother, standing me on a ledge, aged about 6 or so, exploring my private parts.' At that time I knew something of her half-brother George's tendencies; I knew nothing that could lead me to suppose that she here referred to her other half-brother, Gerald. Was I, to adapt Mr Freeman's words, 'to believe that both half-brothers were involved'? In fact I was; but this did not become apparent until evidence came to light *after* the publication of my biography. (This evidence has now been published in *Moments of Being*, 1976). In later printings and in the English paper-back edition the record was set straight; in America, owing to the economics of printing and publishing, it was not. I have explained the business at greater length in the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* No. 6 (Winter 1977).

I apologise to all concerned.

QUENTIN BELL

Cobbe Place
Beddingham
Lewes, Sussex

Spanish anarchism

Sir, Maurice Richardson's review of Murray Bookchin's book *The Spanish Anarchists* (NS 14 July) is full of fun but short on facts, and many of these are irrelevant or inaccurate.

The reason why Fanelli was able to communicate with groups of Spanish workers in 1868, although he could not speak Spanish and they could not speak Italian, was that he was a Freemason addressing Freemasons.

The view of Makhno given in Paustovsky's memoirs 40 years after the event is a travesty, as may be seen from the historical studies by Arshinov and Voline, or Footman and Avrich. Far from being a crazy sadist, he was a remarkable partisan leader who kept the black flag flying in Ukraine and defended a libertarian revolution against both Red and White armies – very much like the Spanish anarchists during the Civil War.

Mr Richardson's spelling and dating are rather shaky. And what is all the stuff about Marx doing in a discussion of Spanish anarchism? I don't get it.

NICOLAS WALTER

134 Northumberland Road
Harrow, Middlesex

Libertarianism and NAFF

Sir, We were amused to observe that Mr Christopher Hill, judging from his review of *Law and the Rise of Capitalism* in your last issue (NS 14 July), seems to have NAFF under *his* bed!

Contrary to his unsubstantiated assertion, however, NAFF did not 'sponsor' the recent 'attack' on marxists and radicals (by which we presume he means the Gould Report). We hope that he applies a somewhat higher standard of scholarship and concern for the truth and evidence in his historical scholarship than he does in this comment.

Moreover, why this – alas – solitary critique should be labelled 'philistine' quite escapes us. The constant misrepresentation, smearing, or ignoring of classical liberal and libertarian dissentors from the statist and collectivist academic establishment – and that establishment's hysterical response to the slightest criticism – would seem more deserving of such an appellation.

CHRIS R. TAME
Research Department
The National Association for Freedom
11 Grape Street
London WC2

Nature lovers

Sir, To answer a question in Alan Ryan's review (NS 23 June) of the book *Sex Law* by Tony Honoré: because the 1967 Act allows two over-21 males their *private* pleasures the police have intensified the discouragement of *public* displays. This is justifiable, but it's hard luck for 'nature lovers'!

HARRY EDWARDS

Sutton, Surrey

Victor Gollancz

Sir, I have been commissioned by Victor Gollancz Ltd to write a biography of the late Victor Gollancz. Can you please assist me by publishing this request for material relevant to his life, whether it be in the form of papers or personal reminiscences? All papers will be returned promptly.

RUTH DUDLEY EDWARDS

22b Elmwood Road
West Croydon
Surrey

P. G. Wodehouse

Sir, With the approval and help of his family, I am writing a new life of P. G. Wodehouse. I shall be most grateful if anyone who can contribute letters or memories will be kind enough to write to me.

FRANCES DONALDSON

1 Chalcot Crescent
London NW1

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

Richard Cobb

Les Godoms

The Hundred Years' War: The English in France 1337-1453 by DESMOND SEWARD *Constable* £6.95

The conventional view of the Hundred Years' War would no doubt be that it was provoked by the succession crisis to the throne of France, as a result of the rival yet interlocking claims of Valois and Plantagenet, following the death of the last Capetian, Charles IV, in 1328. It has also been argued that the period of 116 years of war, occupation, exploitation, and atrocity polarised a sense of national identity on both sides of the Channel, contributing to a feeling of English superiority and to a lasting Anglophobia among the inhabitants of Northern France on the subject of *les godoms,* a sentiment still prevalent in right-wing circles in the 1930s and that flourished further on the events of 1940. Edward III, the Black Prince, and Richard III, we are told, spoke French in preference to English, though they may have known something of that language. Richard indeed apparently owed much of his unpopularity to the belief that he was 'frenchified' and that he sought to bring the War to an end. Henry IV and Henry V (who emerges, in the present book, as a remarkably conceited *swine*) apparently spoke English as a first language. Any English schoolboy knows of Crécy and Agincourt, but has probably never heard of Castillon.

But such simple polarisations obscure what, at all times, was never a straight fight between two nation states or two rival national traditions and interests. The English left a lasting impression of detestation, understandably in Caen, and, more generally, in Lower Normandy; but Artois, Picardy, the Parisis, the Orléanais, *Upper* Normandy, and Rouen in particular, showed considerable attachment to the English connection. Predictably, Guyenne and Gascony much preferred the distant rule of the Plantagenets to the intrusive and present one of the Valois. Bordeaux, which had English *maires* as well as French ones (including Sir Robert Swynborne and his son Thomas, both buried in Little Horksley, Essex), welcomed in the armies of General Beresford in 1814 and, under the Third Republic, produced the politician and historian, Richard Waddington.

The great merit of the present book is to remind us that the war was as much about plunder and its usual accompaniments, rape (including the rape of nuns), arson, wanton destruction and wholesale slaughter (chivalry does not seem to have extended very far downwards in the social scale), as about dynastic rivalries. Mr Seward insists above all on the War as a constant and often accelerated factor of social mobility for the smaller gentry, and even for a few bondsmen, of Southern England. A great many small knights made huge fortunes out of ransom, pillage, *le pâtis* and *les chevauchées,* and similar direct forms of military extortion, in a matter of ten or twenty years, returning, if they were lucky enough to survive – and the chances of an early death were very great – to England to build castles (and, occasionally, churches, though more often elaborate tombs for themselves and their wives), and to secure for themselves brides from the lower ranks of the nobility or of the wealthier cloth merchants. A great many families established their fortunes as a direct result of the extortionate practices of economic warfare, or from mulcting a *vicomté*, or a larger area, or a town, as an English governor or official. Many knights obtained not merely French titles, but territories to go with them. At an even lower level, there were conscious efforts toward colonisation, especially in Normandy, the author claiming that as many as 10,000 Englishmen were settled in Harfleur by 1419, after the original population had been massacred or driven out; and he refers to similar settlements in Caen and in Honfleur. Many of them seem to have married Norman girls, though it is unlikely that they stayed in Normandy after the loss of the Duchy. In the older English territories of the South-West, no such direct colonisation was ever attempted.

Participation in the official war or in such semi-private enterprises as 'rutting' ('rutters', from *les routiers*) established the personal fortunes and precipitated the social advancement of such knights as Sir John Hawkwood, Sir Robert Knollys, Sir Hugh Calveley, Sir John Creswell, Sir John de Cobham, Sir Mathew Gurney, Sir Richard Scrope, Sir Thomas Hungerford, Sir Robert Salle, the brothers James and Robert Fiennes (the former murdered by Jack Cade), Sir John Assheton and Sir John Fastolf. The best pickings were in ransoms, though straight pillage could bring in sizeable profits. Back in England, Sir Edward Ballingbridge built Bodiam, the elder Fiennes, Knowle, the younger, Hurstmonceux, and, on the March, Sir William ap Thomas, Raglan.

It is easy to see why the War should have been so popular, not only with those great magnates closest to the throne, but with a whole mass of new knights, bowmen, mercenaries, convicted murderers, and so on. Among the 'rutters' and those who, in one capacity or other of pillage, did best out of the War, there seems to have been a heavy concentration of knights from Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent and Sussex. Does this simply have something to do with proximity? And does it apply too to the lower ranks, to the mercenaries? Jack Cade was – whatever else he was, and the author says he was an Irishman – a 'man of Kent' and he was driven into armed revolt, in May 1440, because he was cross with the way the War was going and because he believed that the loss of Normandy had resulted from treason in high places. It was not so much a popular uprising, as one of small knights threatened by the deprivation of the profits of war. There is, however, a moral ending to this wretched chronicle of 116 years of looting, killing and careless destruction, which left the whole of Northern France and much of Brittany totally bare, the surviving population taking to the woods. The endless War against France, when, and because, it did end, led directly to the Wars of the Roses, in which many of the principal profiteers, great and small, proceeded to kill one another, and in which the rural population of England experienced at least some of the horrors that had decimated that of the Parisis, Artois, Picardy, and Flanders, Brittany, and the Orléanais.

Of further interest, especially to the modern historian, are the incidental illustrations of continuity. Godefroi d'Harcourt 'told Edward III (in 1346) that the people of Normandy were not used to war'. The duc d'Harcourt told this reviewer (in 1944) 'qu'on ne fait pas la guerre en Normandie'. It was raining in Rouen during most of the siege of 1419, just as it was raining in Rouen under (and on) Flaubert, Maupassant, *Boule de Suif* and is under (and on) M. Lecanuet. I have already referred to 'the Bordeaux connection'. And, in the last 25 years, English academics and NEW STATESMAN readers have been engaged in recreating a more permanent summer colonisation of Guyenne, along the old line of castles to the east of Bordeaux.

On this side of the Channel, the profits of the War left a number of lasting monuments to baronial pride, none finer than Bodiam, and many brasses of heavily armoured knights in country churches. More insidiously, the War resulted in the glorification of the horrible Henry V. On the French side, it took the form of the somewhat poisoned gift of the memory of *la Pucelle,* a well-worn emblem of Anglophobia, adopted, at different times, or sometimes together, by extreme Right and extreme Left, poor Jehanne being posthumously enrolled in both the Croix de Feu, the Jeunesses Patriotes, the LVF, and, in her reincarnation as Danielle Casanova, in the PCF. Recently the lead coffin containing the remains of John, Duke of Bedford, Regent of France, who died in the Norman capital in 1435, was discovered under the high altar of Rouen cathedral, a less contentious relic than the burnt Joan of Arc or the viscera of Henry V. The Regent did at least genuinely *like* the Normans.

This is a useful book, though, for an author born in Paris, Seward is remarkably careless over the spelling of French place names: Montpelier (the English spelling, perhaps, not the French), Castelnaudry (Castelnaudary), Pérrigord (Périgord), Peronne (Péronne), Corbeille (Corbeil), Columiers (Coulommiers), Gourlay-sur-Marne (Gournay-sur-Marne), Montjoy (Montjoie). He has invented a geographical area called 'L'Ile-de-Paris' (I knew Paris *floated*; I did not know it was an island). I cannot believe the population of France in the 1330s was as much as 21 million (it was only about 25 million in 1789), unless we killed an *awful* lot of people between then and 1400. It is silly to describe English governors and vicomtes as *gauleiters.* Minor irritants, no doubt, for this is a well-written narrative, beautifully illustrated, and which takes into account most recent research. It is also a good read; and the author does not pull his punches. I like especially 'Mortimer, perhaps the nastiest man ever to have ruled England'. It is a big claim.

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John Keegan

Officer Class

Sir Richard Burton by MICHAEL HASTINGS *Hodder & Stoughton* £7.50
Evelyn Baring, the Last Proconsul by CHARLES DOUGLAS-HOME *Collins* £7.50

These two biographies resemble each other in subject very closely. Each is the life of an Englishman whose career began in India but found fruition in Africa. Both were passionate observers of the worlds through which they moved, relentless diarists, restless travellers, lovers of the wilderness. Both were of striking physical appearance. Both were partners in devoted marriages founded on something other than physical passion. Both – the detail is not entirely irrelevant – were created Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George. Both were very clever and very brave. Both were Oxford men. And there the resemblance – between a man almost suffocatingly good and one even madder, badder and more dangerous to know than Byron – ends.

And not only that between the books' subjects. For, no matter what sort of life Baring had had written of him, or by what means, even including the random typewriting of a platoon of immortal monkeys, it could not possibly resemble Michael Hastings's biography of Burton. It would be easy simply to say that he has written a bad book. But it is difficult to convey in exactly what way it is bad, since it consists of three different elements, each bad in itself, and made worse by juxtaposition with the other two. Indeed, the author plants in the mind of the reader the suspicion that he must have proceeded by the William Burroughs method of interleaving passages written at different times and in different moods, in this case when he was respectively trying, and failing, to be James Joyce, G. M. Young and Lady Antonia Fraser. James Joyce:

> Dogsbottom scallycat sinner and canard Dick Byron roister goose who dare declare the family purse a clearance whip to harvest the Irish Famine? (heading to chapter III)

G. M. Young:

> 1840 was a turning point. Queen Victoria married Albert; Robert Peel became the new Prime Minister; the Whigs were the predominant party and they relied on the burgeoning middle classes to provide them with support. The period was one of slow reform. The Chartist movement was strong.

Lady Antonia:

> She was 19. Walking along the Boulogne Ramparts with her sister. A warm September day in 1850. Isabel Arundell was a tall young woman with blue eyes and a rather square jaw. She had thin lips which smiled warmly and thick brown hair flowed beneath her hat. She had been educated for six years in an Essex convent.

There are also traces of the work of a fourth hand, apparently not the author's but that of an idiot fourth-form nephew who has subcontracted the general history passages.

> By 1821, the major powers of Britain, Austria and Prussia were keen to normalise the situation. There was to be a Restoration in France (there had been two, 1814, 1815). Russia wanted the sea lanes and happily acquired Finland (annexed 1809). Austria took back certain Italian states (restored 1815). Even the defeated French had enough Empire building strength left to claim Algeria (not until 1830). Slavery in the North Americas was soon to be abolished (not until 1865), and the United States was marching already into Mexico (not until 1846).

Michael Hastings, in his other life, is a successful novelist and playwright. His friends might think of applying for a supervision order.

Any other biography must shine by comparison, even one begun with 'the thought that [the subject] was too good a man to make an interesting life'. And it is true that the son of Lord Cromer, the latter truly a proconsul at the high noon of empire, is not a figure whose name on its own sells books. Governor of Southern Rhodesia during the second world war, High Commissioner in South Africa immediately afterwards, Governor of Kenya just before independence, these were twilight posts which cast short shadows. Charles Douglas-Home, briefly Baring's ADC in 1959, has nevertheless succeeded not only in giving them substance and significance but, despite his foreboding, in making their occupant, for whom he clearly felt the deepest affection, appear both admirable and interesting.

He has done so, first, by working very hard. He has interviewed over 150 people who knew Baring and has read through the whole of his enormous deposit of papers, including his notebooks. Here he recorded his thoughts and feelings on, among other subjects, 'railway finance, immigration flows, adjectival concords, mortification, the sacraments, dogfish biology, Roumanian debts, contraband control, housing corporations and coloured manning in secondary industries' (interestingly no history, in which he got a First). Second, he has written what he has to say in a spare, elegant and compelling style which carries the reader effortlessly from paragraph to paragraph throughout a long book, and provides the strongest possible argument for the value of a training on a great newspaper. Third, he varies an unavoidably slow pace and solemn mood with a carefully seeded scattering of delightfully irreverent character sketches, incongruities and tales of eccentricity. Baring's mother, a daughter of Longleat, he reveals as belonging firmly to the tradition of Victorian aristocratic scarecrows and misers, wearing all her clothes in layer on stifling layer at arrival for a country visit 'to save on the luggage', and adopting her son's prep-school lace-ups after he had grown out of them. Fourth, and most important, he is frank, and so convincing about his hero's character that he does not shrink from describing the aloofness, exclusiveness and caste snobbery which were the complement to Baring's high-mindedness and dedication to duty.

Nevertheless, Baring *is* his hero and, at the end of the book, one can see why. What one would quibble with is his belief that he represented the last of the proconsular breed. Would that that were so. Alas, their descendants abound today in every government office, inflamed by that terrifying knowing-betterness of which Baring, Milner, Cromer, Lugard were the personification and example. Like tiny Austria after 1918, Britain has suffered the fate of ingesting overnight an army of unhorsed imperial servants, whose undented and impressive pretensions their domestic counterparts have been all too ready to ape. As a result the British, alone among the peoples of Western Europe, have undergone colonialisation by their own official class, which has carved out new viceroyalties for itself in every corner of the country's administration and economy. Little wonder that the most successful practitioners of enterprise in our post-war world promise to be the East African Asians, who bring to it a healthy and energetic disrespect for the system, developed under two other colonial regimes, which the rest of us have yet to learn.

Malcolm Bradbury

Dreaming Ego

William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond by CLEANTH BROOKS *Yale University Press* £12.60

Back in 1963, Cleanth Brooks published *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country*. A major Southern critic was writing about a major Southern novelist; the book took a key place in Faulkner criticism. Well-researched, sane, subtle, sympathetic to Faulkner's vision of Southern history and community, it took the major novels and rooted them, firmly but with a critic's tact, in the Yoknapatawpha and the Southern community. It was also a somewhat old-fashioned book, resisting the high symbolist or modernist interpretations, making Faulkner a novelist whose great art was to mediate the cosmopolitan and the local. At the time Brooks promised a companion volume, on the non-Yoknapatawpha books and on Faulkner's technique and style; now it has come. It covers the remaining ground – the poems, the play, the sketches, the early stories, the unfinished novel *Elmer, Soldiers' Pay, Mosquitoes, Flags in the Dust, Pylon, The Wild Palms, A Fable*. The same sane virtues are there; the accumulated research is invaluable. The same questions persist: does it give a full view of Faulkner?

The books outside Yoknapatawpha are the ones we rightly push toward the edge of things; nonetheless, they pose much of the Faulkner problem. Brooks rightly takes them as, in part, a way of exploring Faulkner's literary debts, especially those to Romanticism, and above all to Keats, and to the decadents. Faulkner's early writings are packed with avaricious borrowings, the accumulations of a self-educating provincial catching at the classics and new texts, like Eliot's, that came his way; and some remarkable things came his way early. The all-too-patent echoes from what seems a chaotic set of sources throughout the poems of *The Marble Faun* (1924) and *A Green Bough* (1933) help vitiate these books as poetry, but they are testaments to a literary education in tune with the times, and the coherence is there in the reference back to the decadence. The symbolist-decadent mood of the 1890s came back again, revised, in the 1920s, especially in America: in a postwar time, and one in which progressive politics had collapsed, there were sound reasons for this.

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It was a season of new life-patterns and sharp sensibilities; dandyish style, which merged art and life, was a solution to historical change without historical meaning. Variants of the lost romantic populate 1920s American fiction: Fitzgerald's intended title for *This Side of Paradise, The Romantic Egoist,* was ideal for the decade. But beautiful was damned; the waste land crossed with the world of the dreaming ego, the art-hunger. This was updated decadent lore; and notions of the failure of history, the decline of the West, the degenerative wastes of modernity, the inherent narcissism of existence, the need to refine sensation beyond measure, were apt to the postwar mood.

Faulkner was tuned to all of this, and Brooks, with excellent research, gives us much useful material. He traces back many of Faulkner's most explicit sources, in Housman, early Eliot, Swinburne, Wilde, Gautier, as well as to the more familiar Keats, though not to Verlaine or Mallarmé; and he teases the novels for their decadent allusions. What he establishes is their relevance, what he does not is their power: decadence was a way of converting historical inertia and despair into modern style, in life, in art. This is what dominates in *Mosquitoes, Soldiers' Pay, Pylon*: the decadent motif is stylishly, if sometimes clumsily, clad in its modern garb, in figures like the death-hungry airman, the epicene new woman (Brooks, by the way, excellently explores Faulkner's multiple usage of 'epicene'), the artist hunting stasis out of time. Symbolist spaces and enclosures abound: the only coherent sexual postures are virginity or sexual hyperaesthesia, the virginal and the chaste are forever in contention, time rots and wastes. These are crucial motifs, and they go on: into Quentin Compson, Horace Benbow, the rhythms of consciousness endlessly in dispute with sequence, mind at odds with history.

But Brooks reminds us that Faulkner in some sense *chose* that history. Together, his two books argue that in establishing the collective community that is Yoknapatawpha, the postage stamp of native soil in the Southern subnation, Faulkner's achievement changed and grew dense: it was not only a social but a compositional density, and it gave history its due. An excellent comparative reading of the stories 'Miss Zilphia Gant' and 'A Rose for Emily' establishes that evolution; a last chapter on 'Faulkner on Time and History' seeks to fix it. We are right, I'm sure, to think the middle books out of Yoknapatawpha the best, though the best are surely, in fact, the most experimental: *The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Light in August.* What I think Brooks mutes in his total discussion is the overall power and coherence of that symbolist-decadent lore he is so competent in establishing as a presence, and the way it goes on to qualify that history. Here, again, as in Brooks's earlier book, are judgments of unmistakeable centrality, and key readings, forays into the hearts of the books, not omitting just penetration of significant weak spots – so *A Fable* is particularly well examined for its disappointments. But here again is a Faulkner who too much transcends decadence. In fact, Faulkner's decadent tragedy of life in time and history is what compels the substance and also the formal nature of the best novels, too. Which is why Faulkner remains for us among the best of the modernists.

Lorna Sage

Girls Won't Be Girls

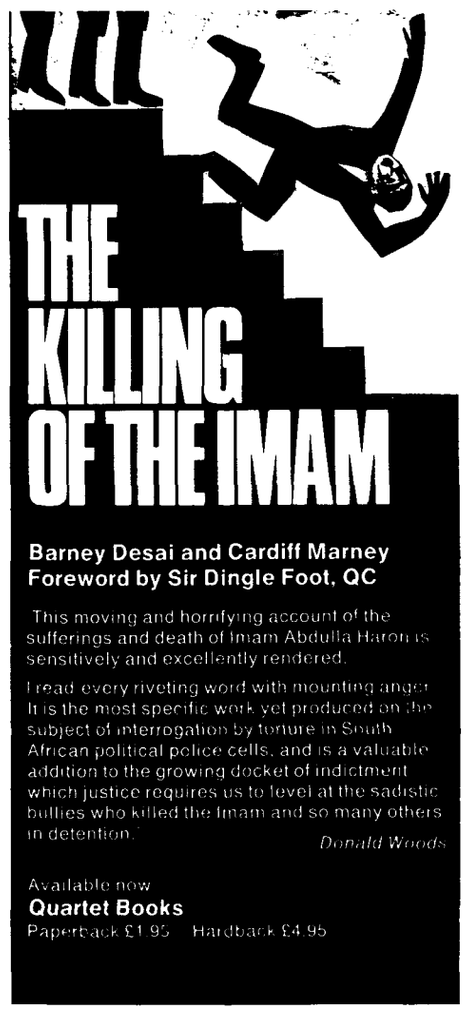
Louisa May by MARTHA SAXTON *Deutsch* £7.50

Little Women, like nearly all wildly successful children's classics, is a book about not wanting to grow up. More specifically of course about girls not wanting to grow up, and being taught to accept it, or else: Beth's pathetic death is an early case of teenage anorexia, and Jo's tragi-comic moan – 'I wish wearing flat-irons on our heads would keep us from growing up. But buds will be roses, and kittens, cats' – has found an echo in millions of girlish readers faced with the baffling doom of femininity. Martha Saxton's new biography of Louisa May Alcott is good on all aspects of its sad and fascinating subject, but especially so on the reasons why this particular woman (35 in 1868, and prematurely aged through illness and overwork) should have written the most desperately 'jolly' and hollow of the justifications of the awful change from bud to rose.

A change all the more irritating because boys will simply be boys. The sequels – *Good Wives*, *Little Men*, *Jo's Boys* – make it nastily clear that while the little women turn into cooks, providers, nurses (Louisa ruined her health for good nursing during the Civil War) the men carry on being irresponsible innocents, philosophical naturalists puddling about in ponds or ideas, and being late for tea. The models for these ageless kite-fliers and bug-hunters were the extraordinary collection of New England transcendentalists, vegetarians, abolitionists and water-drinkers she grew up among, more especially Emerson and Thoreau, and most especially her father. Bronson Alcott, self-preserved for posterity in his voluminous journals, is the anti-hero of Ms Saxton's book. Without attacking him, merely by stringing artfully together his own vague, high-minded meditations (he liked to allude to himself as 'we', perhaps so as to include God) she produces a wonderfully comic and horrible portrait of this saintly parasite. He was his own vocation; though he had his share of theories (humane ones about education which he could never quite put into practice, unpleasant ones about the demonic nature of dark-skinned people, like his wife and Louisa), he had really only one idea – that 'Being in preference to doing, is the great aim'. Upheld by the mystery of self, he survived his early failure as a schoolteacher, and lived cheerfully on relations, admirers and his wife's and daughters' earnings, exuding grace.

For them the case was different. As 'being' or financial necessity demanded, they dragged from one freezing farmhouse to another, living in borrowed digs when experiments in community living and vegetable self-sufficiency failed, and worrying over their sins of anger and worldliness. Anna, the eldest daughter (mindless Meg in *Little Women*), was her father's favourite, and took fairly readily to the contradictory role of wage-earner-cum-angel-child; her mother Abba, however, began referring darkly to 'the oppressive circumstances of my muddled life'; and Louisa struggled desperately to convert her insecurity and resentment into guilt, so as not to blame her father. Lizzie (Beth) solved all contradictions by fading away, while the youngest, May (Amy), learned a little of father's wisdom and (more than any of them) pleased herself. The most interesting thing that Ms Saxton uncovers in mining the mountains of family papers once again (the cult of 'being' demanded pretty continuous self-analysis of everyone) is the surprising effectiveness of Bronson's gentle dictatorship. He kept his women in an ingenious double bind: it wasn't that he despised them; on the contrary, he admired the feminine qualities of passivity, intuition, fine feeling and so on to the extent that he appropriated them for himself, and left the females of the family to cope with the 'masculine' material world. They had to 'do', couldn't just 'be', and yet they felt guilty about it, because of the ideal of femininity he was always praising.

Very neat. As Ms Saxton says, 'It is not fair to accuse Bronson of standard sexual bias . . . He wanted his women to be ladies, but he wanted his men to be ladies, too.' Like God (very like absentee Mr March in *Little Women*) he withdrew into self-contemplation, and left his family to figure out his mysterious ways as best they could. Louisa, like earlier apologists for the Almighty, came to the conclusion that anything that appeared to be an inadequacy in him was really a fault in her – with Jo March, she was a misfit, a boy-girl who must tame herself into womanliness (while somehow at the same time paying for boots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and coals). One effect of this was that all her work, including her writing, was devalued in her eyes; she saw herself moving in busybody circles round her father, round Thoreau, round Emerson, and they all (without doing a thing) made her feel aggressive, unnatural or sinful. Her early novel *Moods*, centring on Thoreau, she revised brutally at the request of a publisher and felt embarrassed by it in later years. Her anonymous and pseudonymous gothics, written in her thirties, she dismissed as written *only* for money, whereas the truth was quite the reverse. She wrote them for love (which she was never to have), and for sex (ditto) and to keep her ego quiet. Their beautiful, scheming actress-heroines who contrive by sheer mechanical ingenuity to squeeze a little passion out of the frozen males at their disposal are all too intelligible – she knew she was being sinful in inventing them, 'indulging in writing', says Ms Saxton, 'as if it were a carnal act'. The best of these witch-women, Jean Muir in *Behind a Mask* ('Or, A Woman's Power') will serve as an indication of what she was up to just two years before *Little Women*:

> . . . sitting on the floor, she unbound and removed the long abundant braids from her head, wiped the pink from her face, took out several pearly teeth, and slipping off her dress appeared herself indeed, a haggard, worn, and moody woman of thirty at least.

Her own teeth and hair had suffered disastrously as a result of her Civil War illness: she gives Jean Muir back the bits and pieces she'd lost, and sets her loose on a family of short-sighted men, with delightful and dire results. She'd read Charlotte Brontë, of course, and knew what a governess could do.

Her career, though, was not to follow the Brontë line; she was, thanks to the transcendentalists and the tradition of self-catechising, too vulnerable and anxious for that. *Pilgrim's Progress* and the Pilgrim Fathers brooded over her too, in the middle distance: in *Little Men* (1871) she used one of the most charming boys to get in a dig at her mentors – 'The Pilgrims killed all the Indians, and got rich,' he lisps, 'and hung the witches, and were very good.' She was no witch. In the children's books, apart from the odd private joke, she made her peace with Bronson and the Almighty, and – as Martha Saxton argues very convincingly – retreated into permanent adolescence, wanting 'everything to fall into moral pleats', warding off sexuality and turning adulthood into boy-minding and self-abnegation.

Fictional Jo March produced gothics for cash, and found her true self in writing for children. Louisa May Alcott found that morality paid very well (as Bronson in his roundabout way had always known) and for the rest of her ailing life traded uneasily on it, trying to persuade herself she'd grown up at last. She disliked the fame that came too late, and for the wrong reasons, and spent hours going through her papers excising evidences of insubordination and complicated, untidy thinking. She looked at phrases like 'life and experience', and substituted 'inner consciousness and observation', as if to lay no claim to having lived at all. She'd always shared her birthday with Bronson, and almost shared a deathday too – she died two days after him on 6 March 1888, as though she no longer existed when he wasn't watching. Ms Saxton tells her story with exemplary clarity and sympathy, doing justice to the achievement and to the waste as well.

Anthony Quinton

Unstoppability

A Rational Animal by ANTONY FLEW *Oxford* £5.95

Antony Flew has been an active figure on those margins of the philosophical scene that are likely to be of interest to the general reader for quite a long time. Twenty-five years ago he published what must have been the first philosophically serious book wholly devoted to the subject of psychical research, a lively and combative item that received less attention than it deserved. Since then he has written books about the existence of God, crime and disease, the philosophy of Hume, a host of articles on a wide range of topics and a hefty introduction to Western philosophy.

In all this he has left a notable and distinctive impression, one that makes it impossible to confuse him with anyone else. To start with there is his polemical enthusiasm for the extra-philosophical implications of philosophical argument. It would seem that the chief energy behind his earlier thinking was exasperated hostility to religion in its organised, standard form. There has always been an air of jumping up and down and of banging the desk about his style. Since those early days the less decrepit religion of left-wing progressivism has been the consistent object of his attacks. Many heads of this hydra excite his ardour: egalitarian trashing of serious education, the blaming of crime on 'society' rather than the criminal, and – attacked with somewhat self-defeating, ancient-mariner-like insistence – reverence for the Soviet Union.

Flew's prose is appropriately tumultuous; it is a buttonholing instrument which, having seized one's attention, overwhelms one with parenthetical insertions. The intellectual realm his polemics suggest is a scene of incessant and operatically colourful activity, a riot of erroneous inferences, mis-statements of principles, ugly implications against which battle has to be done. He resembles the ordinary, demure, academically-enclosed philosopher much as a Glasgow policeman resembles an Edwardian governess.

In the essays that make up *A Rational Animal* he is still very much at work applying philosophical theses to matters of obvious general interest. The connecting theme is the nature of man, about which he has two main points to make. The dominant one is the doctrine of Ryle, that man is a man and not a machine, that the undeniable phenomenon of human choice clearly rules out the possibility of a truly deterministic science of human conduct. The other, less emphasised point is that a man or person is an organism of a certain kind and not, as for Plato and Christianity, a soul that inhabits an organic body for a little while. A good many of the essays are fairly new; the others – two date from the 1950s – have been much rewritten. Although not a treatise, *A Rational Animal* still hangs together pretty coherently.

There is a tension, which is not to say an inconsistency, between the two points about the nature of man he is concerned to make. The choice thesis is directed against the philosophical partisans of science; the embodiment thesis against theologians. But he can perfectly well reply why should not the truth lie between the extremes once in a while?

The choice thesis is developed in the longish title essay and an essay on Hume. He draws a distinction between physical causation and what he sees as the very different sort of causation that figures in the explanation of conduct. The first is 'unstoppable', in that if the cause occurs the effect *must* follow, and the regularity in question is one we are ready to ascribe beyond the realm of the actual in such assertions as 'if the mortar had got wet the building would have collapsed'. The second is simply a matter-of-fact uniformity with no necessity about it, although it allows for prediction as much as causation of the hard, primary, physical kind.

Now this crucial distinction, although vividly presented, is not very thoroughly argued for. No clear account is given of how we are to decide whether a regularity is of one kind or the other. We make confident counterfactual suppositions about the conduct of people we know as much as about billiard-balls: 'If you had only offered him such a small sum, he would have refused.' Are physical causes uniquely unstoppable? Events have complex causes. Where some of the complex is present we can act so as to produce, or prevent, the effect by producing, or preventing, the rest of it. We are often far from sure that we know the whole constitution of the complex.

Even if the distinction had been more irresistibly drawn, the question of whether both sides of it actually apply would still need an answer. What Flew offers here is slight. He says we know that men make choices because we know that the word 'choice' has a meaning which it gets from its linkage with a recurrent type of incident in human life. Here a battered old argumentative appliance, called the 'paradigm case argument', is exhumed, rather as if the rector of Stiffkey were appointed archbishop of York. Even if it shows that there must be events properly called 'choices', it could not show that those events *must* be uncaused.

Whether or not the difference between motivated actions chosen by human agents and events that are not choices is as deep-seated as Flew thinks, there is certainly a difference, enough to make his brisk handling of Skinner's dogmatic environmentalism effective, to give point to what he says about Malthus's lumping together of vice, misery and moral restraint as checks on population, and to sustain his claim (against Freud's own view of the matter) that psychoanalysis is not a natural science, but none the worse for not being one.

Flew's other, Aristotelian theme is argued for directly in a brisk but rather sketchy essay on materialism and indirectly through some limited, grudging but still quite sincere praise for Lenin as a philosopher. Human minds have to be connected with human bodies, not because they are brains and all bodies have brains, but because they are the systematic dispositions to conduct of human bodies. Here, as with his other theme, he returns to the firm loyalty to Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* he showed at the start of his career. Flew shares with Ryle an attractively human jollity that is thoroughly appropriate to them as champions of the uniqueness of man, who they still insist is part of nature.

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Russell Davies

Empire Builder

An Edmund Wilson Celebration edited by John Wain *Phaidon* £6.95

The life's work of Edmund Wilson adds up to about a yard and a half of books. Just looking at them on the shelf gives me pleasure. For one thing, there is an impressively determined uniformity about their shape: in spite of a lifetime's lurching from publisher to publisher, particularly on this side of the Atlantic (I see seven London houses represented in my collection), Wilson managed to ensure that most of his work appeared, or reappeared, in little squat volumes that sit comfortably in the hand. They have titles that are inviting without being coy: *To The Finland Station*, a suitably muffled heroic cry, is possibly the best-devised of them, though the only one that seems to me unsatisfactory is *The Bit Between My Teeth*, where neither the equestrian image nor the alternative suggestion of toothpick trouble seems especially helpful.

Now the contents of Wilson's books are always helpful. That is what they are above all else. Wilson was fond of laying down the law, but he retained for 50 years the knack of doing it in such a way as to leave the reader in no doubt that the law was there to be – well, not broken, perhaps, but certainly interpreted and revised. The splendid volume of letters which is the latest addition to my Wilson shelf tells of six decades spent in exhaustingly robust debate. He was willing to compare notes with almost anyone. If we could have one huge tome containing all his correspondence, sent and received, I am sure we should see in it as full a record of the intellectual debates of the mid-20th century as could be furnished by any one career. And literary questions would be seen to be part of life. (Dr Leavis, by contrast, who took some trouble to scorn Wilson, succeeded only in shutting himself off from an unworthy society, firing off letters through narrow slits in his wall of silence.)

Temperamentally, then, Wilson is not for specialists. He makes his greatest appeal to readers who have something of his own eclectic spirit. Professional academics see too much of the journalist in him; faced with a bookful of Wilson's enthusiasms, they almost invariably act like spoilsports. You can see this happening at least once in this matey little tribute organised by John Wain, where Andrew Harvey, of All Souls, jumps on Wilson heavily for his 'lack of range' as a critic of poetry. Harvey seems to want Wilson to have been the kind of critic who by giving his Key Interpretations of Great Texts establishes a Position. Hence his complaint that Wilson 'never engaged with much of the world's greatest poetry – that of the Greek, Elizabethan, and French Classical theatres. He never wrote at any length on Goethe or Dante, Pope or Chaucer, Baudelaire or Horace . . .' All this is true, but it fails to give Wilson credit for laying down his undoubtedly sound knowledge of these masters (except possibly Goethe?) as a basis for his remarkably stimulating critical activity at all levels of literature below this topmost stratum. Wilson could express his allegiance to Dante (in preference to Shakespeare, too . . . surprising in such a dedicated materialist), but he could not spare much of his critical energy on examining the kind of masterpiece that can become the life's work of other men.

Wilson reacted adversely to anything he suspected of curbing the variety of life, and it is often amusing to see him booting uncongenial spirits out of the way. Andrew Harvey is not amused, however, and responds scoldingly to judgments which Wilson's ideal reader would allow to pass with a chuckle: 'To call the *Four Quartets*, as Wilson did, "a long muttering with a few flames of vivid speech",' he writes, 'is to show oneself insensitive to the rhetorical demands of a long meditative poem, as well as patronising.' No, it isn't, it is to show oneself to be Edmund Wilson: anti-religious, or at least pungently unreligious, and therefore hostile to the particular incantatory rhetoric of Eliot's meditation. Harvey's essay, further goaded by Wilson's cry 'Is verse a dying technique?', soon turns into an earnest defence of modern poetry – solid stuff in itself, but all proceeding from a misplaced disappointment.

Do I mean, then, that Harvey should have expected of Wilson something less than full critical rigour? In a way, I do. Wilson's writing is to be enjoyed chiefly for the excitement of discovery – *his* discovery, in the first instance. His literary chronicles are like the progress reports of an inspired and generous empire-builder, starting his explorations not from base camp, fortunately, but, as we have said, from an advanced point offering him a chastening view of the peaks. There is always a trace of the auto-didact field-worker in Wilson's attitudes. An essay here by Larzer Ziff notes his taste for the 'minor and neglected', and in standing up for these, of course, Wilson was simultaneously justifying his own exploratory activity. The wonder is that, as a perennial freelance, he was not occasionally drawn into promoting some shabby oeuvre or other simply on the grounds that he'd spent a lot of time on it. But his instinct was reliable in cutting unproductive subjects out of his purview – sometimes brutally, too, for Spanish literature went wholesale down the chute. Hard to justify to an Andrew Harvey, this; but surely a man who spends his life drawing up measured evaluations must sometimes clear his ground peremptorily, for his sanity's sake, There were a few phantom Faculties he simply had to refuse to join.

To those of us who never met Wilson, it is becoming clear that his critical dismissals were by no means as caustic as they might have been. Certainly the Wilson who has begun to emerge from memoirs and correspondence and ancient journals is a good deal more brusque than the gently coaxing figure we readers have had at our elbow all these years. In (friendly) pieces here by Edith Oliver, of the *New Yorker*, and by Alfred Kazin, Wilson features as a loud-voiced, pear-shaped impromptu lecturer in bermuda shorts, carrying a silver-topped cane and a touch more alcohol than he needs. He is given to driving his cane into the Wellfleet beach and discoursing on the Hungarian language to anyone who will listen. In the middle of a Brendan Behan play in Greenwich Village, he calls out (loudly), 'Greatest talent since Sean O'Casey!', stopping the actors' hearts. The life of the mind sounds a bit more trying than Edmund Wilson makes it look on the page.

What's more, Wilson is proved to have failed to inculcate his best principles in his friends, for Kazin recalls 'He could be massive . . .', which is one of the words Wilson took the vastest exception to, especially when he saw it applied to himself. While we're about it, Professor Wain confers the facial omelette upon himself with percussive elan when he says: 'I do not mean that none of us who write criticism ever misquote or get things wrong.' Quite so, Professor, we see what you *do* mean.

The book as a whole is not really up to the standard Wilson deserves. His fiction is very decently treated by John Updike, and his gallant instincts live on in an essay by Clive James, who defends Wilson's verse output – a steeper uphill task than Wilson himself might have chosen. Elsewhere, the formal tributes from grateful minorities – a Hebrew scholar thanking Wilson for his work on the Dead Sea Scrolls, an Indian Rights leader accepting the 'Apologies to the Iroquois' – are touching, but not much more; and Helen Muchnic's rounded chapter on his 'Russian involvement' rather shows up Peter Sharratt's disconsolate listing of Wilson's French interests. But there is plenty of time for proper pieces to be made of these bits. Indeed, you could make this *Edmund Wilson Celebration* an annual event, a year-book, and still have distinguished contributors lining up at the end of the century to get their word in. And I think they would go on finding that though almost anything Wilson wrote will always find respectable gainsayers, every word of it was worth the writing.

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Tom Paulin

Fugitive Spirits

Dorothy Richardson by GLORIA B. FROMM *University of Illinois* £10.50

A Literature Of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing by ELAINE SHOWALTER *Virago* £3.50

Those Victorian photographs of bearded patriarchs flanked by their unsmiling families may seem merely quaint to us nowadays, but it's important to remember how they were once the agents of hideously formidable cultural tyranny. As Gloria Fromm shows in her long, loving biography of Dorothy Richardson, the effort to escape the domination of 'masculine culture' involved an intense struggle against a series of possessive father-figures. Dorothy Richardson's father was a cultivated, eventually bankrupt despot who made her mother feel both damned and stupid, and finally drove her to commit suicide. Stricken by guilt, Dorothy left home to become a dentist's receptionist in London. She wrote reviews, attended Fabian meetings and had an affair with H. G. Wells. She came to realise that Wells was a tyrant who preached freedom, and throughout her life she remained a shrewdly critical friend of the man who appears as 'Hypo Wilson' in her now neglected novel-sequence *Pilgrimage*. Wells put her in his novel *The Passionate Friends* as a minor character called Stella Summersby Satchel, who is 'blonde, erect, huffy-mannered'.

Their relationship became a curious kind of literary argument in which Wells was identified with social realism, the indestructibility of matter, and 'hard-eyed observation'. And in a review of Wells's *Comet* she remarked interestingly on his portrayal of women. Nearly all of them, she said,

> are one specimen, carried away from some biological museum of his student days, dressed in varying trappings, with different shades of hair and proportions of freckle, with neatly tabulated instincts and one vague smile between them all.

Much later she was to term the milieu of Wells's novels a 'humanistic concentration camp', and in her own novels she retreated from the world of social humanism into an inner world of the self. It's perhaps for this reason that she doesn't so much emerge from Ms Fromm's biography as leave vanishing traces of a noble, energetic, strangely fugitive personality. This almost mystical invisibility is apparent in her very fine first novel, *Pointed Roofs* (it's much better than anything by Virginia Woolf), where Mirian shrinks from the 'hard blue eyes' of the German she encounters: no one 'seemed to notice her', no one is 'aware of her existence'.

As volume followed volume critics did begin to notice Dorothy Richardson, and she was praised as the inventor of the stream-of-consciousness technique and sometimes linked with Proust and Joyce. But eventually there was a reaction against her work and she was pushed back into that anonymity which is the diffident centre of her impressionistic narratives. The story of her life is moving, and though Ms Fromm's account lacks the sharpness of John Rosenberg's *Dorothy Richardson: The Genius They Forgot,* no one can fail to be impressed by this enthusiastic record of a gifted woman's struggle to define herself.

Unfortunately, Dorothy Richardson is dismissed by Elaine Showalter, who complains that she 'risked self-destruction through psychic overload, ego death from that state of pure receptivity that George Eliot had described as the roar on the other side of silence'. This modish piece of jargon distorts what George Eliot meant in that famous passage in *Middlemarch,* and it wrongly attributes the passivity of Richardson's impressionism to the fact that she lived 'at the perilous borders of egolessness, in the female country of multiple receptivity'. What this simply means is that she wrote in the way she did because she was a woman – a bit of critical melodrama which is sexist in its implications.

So, too, is this remark about Olive Schreiner's supposedly 'nagging' narrative voice: 'that voice, soft, heavy, continuous, is a genuine accent of womanhood, one of the chorus of secret voices speaking out of our bones, dreadful and irritating but instantly recognisable'. Change the 'our' to 'their' and this sentence could have been written by any old buffer who wanted to put Olive Schreiner down with a convenient stereotype. Similarly, when Ms Showalter comments that a passage in *A Room of One's Own* 'certainly sounds like a feline swipe at Cantabridgian impotence' we are meant to notice that because Virginia Woolf was a woman her wit must be 'feline'.

Ms Showalter believes that there is such a thing as 'feminised language' – it is 'delicate' and 'fastidious' – and she supports her belief by quoting one Ernest Baker, who stated that 'the woman of letters has peculiarities that mark her off from the other sex as distinctly as peculiarities of race or of ancestral tradition'. She is very willing to be patronised by this racial analogy because she believes that 'British women novelists have always, in a sense, lived in a different country from men – and have a literature of their own'. This assumption is literally chauvinist, and not only is it defensive and exclusive but it also merges over 200 very varying talents into a mute sorority where George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë are treated on the same level as Lady Georgiana Chatterton, Julia Pardoe and others now forgotten.

The trouble with these novelists, she suggests, is that they didn't 'band together' and insist that their vocation 'made them superior to the ordinary woman, and perhaps happier'. By this argument, all women ought to aspire to be women novelists, and if they don't then they are merely 'ordinary'. This makes a snobbish mockery of Women's Liberation, which is concerned with equality, not superiority. And because of its central assumption that women writers inhabit an imaginary sub-culture 'within the frame-work of a larger society', *A Literature of Their Own* has very little to do with feminism.

This emerges most noticeably in the remark that 'the tender and adoring friendship of women for women' in one of Mrs Humphry Ward's novels reflects 'the intense bonds of the female subculture'. What this essentially represents is a wish to secede from the territory we all live in. Women must seek solidarity in order to cultivate tender relationships with each other, and not for the sake of challenging sexual injustice and exploitation. As a message this is clearly defeatist, and it's very much to be hoped that no one listens to it.

Christopher Reid

The Painter and his Friends

A closed circle:
the intimacy
of pigs in an orange.

Here we sit
around the ancient
ruins of a Stilton,

eating and talking,
drinking and smoking.
A smeared knife

rests on a side-plate
with odd rinds,
to show how the artist

must deal with detail . . .
Somebody's fingers
prise apart

reluctant pigs,
that straggle behind them
strings of white pith,

and one after another
the pips appear
between her lips.

A board of squares,
a bowl of rounds
and our delightful

contiguity
to a check table-cloth
need to be celebrated.

Of course, I relish
the nasal tang
of a ripe Camembert,

the comforting din
inside my head
of a munched apple –

but I shall forget
these trivial things
once I am painting

my great picture,
The Feast of the Dead.
There, I shall have

a girl in a print dress,
splintering
the skull of a walnut,

to get at its brain.

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Claire Tomalin

Snapdragon

For Love Alone and **Letty Fox: Her Luck** by CHRISTINA STEAD *Virago* £2.95 each

Christina Stead was born in Sydney in 1902; she came to Europe in 1928, lived in America during the Forties, left for Europe again during the McCarthy period and has now completed the circle back to Australia. Her best-known novel is *The Man Who Loved Children,* a mammoth study of the family as a battleground of monsters prepared to fight to the last claw. It's a book that has been much admired without becoming generally popular; her others are very little known in this country. But Lillian Hellman said last year that she ought to be given a Nobel Prize; other, younger critics have become interested in her work; and now Virago, with its usual excellent judgment, has put out two of her novels of the mid-Forties in paperback.

Paperback monsters – they are huge books, like catalogues or encyclopaedias of the female condition. Somebody should have made her leave out a lot; she is like an unappeasable hostess piling up the plate. It's all good, but it's too much; the reader flags. (This is not just reviewer's grouse.) But then one has to say that they are also magnificent books. They are cold and snappish, solid, very literary; with a great deal of digested reading of classic fiction behind them. Anyone who doubts whether there are still real books being produced should read one this summer.

They are classically conceived, too, in spite of the elephantiasis. *For Love Alone* – the wrong title, suggesting a soft-hearted book – is the story of an obsession and its breaking. Teresa (of *The Man Who Loved Children*) determines to break away from the remnants of her family and from Australia and finds her motive power in her love for Jonathan Crow, a young university teacher who sails for London ahead of her. Crow is a wretch; he uses women to buttress his own shaky confidence and whines about his poverty. But Teresa needs an idol and he is smart and quick and helps her to see there are possibilities apart from the horrors of Sydney. The first third of the book makes one's bones ache by its picture of the lives of those nice Australian women, spinsters, office and college girls, aunts and sisters all concentrated on trousseaux and prying into one another's prospects. To get away from this Teresa takes a factory job, pinches every penny, walks miles to work, rejects a decent suitor and half starves herself for several years till she has the passage money to Europe. Crow writes her occasionally flirtatious letters; she dreams of and adores him.

She arrives to find London grimy, dark and depressed; these are the Thirties. Crow treats her with nonchalant cruelty. It becomes a tale of two city atmospheres, Sydney thick with genteel sweat, London poverty at the Gissing level, with Euston Road lodgings, rude landladies, and a cup of tea at Lyons a luxury. It also concerns itself with ugly cravings, since both Crow and Teresa are the victims of ideals of chastity and find no decent way of coming to terms with it. The good man who appears for her at the end is quite insubstantial, much less vivid than her last sight of the graceless Crow, luridly reflected in a cheap jeweller's window.

The patently autobiographical aspect may be responsible for the density of the atmosphere, the emotional charge of the book. Teresa is almost crushed, but the author is as near to being tenderly engaged on her behalf as one can imagine her being – whereas Letty, in *Letty Fox,* is a creature of tough, rubbery resilience and self-esteem who amuses her creator almost as much as Lorelei amused Anita Loos 20 years before. Letty is an American girl born about 1920. She quickly learns the lessons of her milieu: first, the necessity of trying to attach every male she meets to herself, by whatever means; second, the persistent extraction of money from men. Pleased with her successes and only briefly abashed by her failures, she narrates her own story without a trace of sentiment, as stoutly and straightforwardly as any young rogue bred to petty crime. The sexual act is nothing to her but a transaction; it's what you get in return that counts. You can see why, when the book was published in 1946, it shocked by its matter-of-factness, its claim to represent the experience of ordinary New York college girls.

Letty despises her mother, as all the women in the book do, because she has failed not only to keep her husband but – much worse – to extract any alimony from him. This is the essential, which everyone else manages much better. A wondering French observer remarks,

> What luck you have, you American women! Men who pay for everything and don't ask for accounts. Yes, it's Protestantism. The men believe they've done their wives insult and injury by sleeping with them. They must pay for ever! . . . And as for the women . . . they behave as if they are disabled for life as soon as they're married.

Letty's grandmothers and aunts and cousins are all in this business of selling and blackmailing on a sexual basis, producing children as reinforcements. One virtuoso aunt claims to have four who, although they are never seen, are used entirely effectively against her humorous but doglike husband until he commits despairing suicide.

Letty's reminiscences take her to England (a progressive school, smartly put down) and France; to her two grandmothers, one a rich hotel-owner; to college and New York office life, until she does finally enter the haven of marriage to a rich man. Her obsession with her looks, her clothes, her talents, her constant self-appraisal and awareness of her family's appraisal of her 'chances' have brought her to this necessary culmination.

A certain perspective is opened on to all this by Letty's father's mistress, always named in a whisper as *die Konkubine* by the other women and mysterious to them because she lives outside the rules of their game. She works; she refuses to bear children; she laughs and displays no jealousy, nor does she fret for money or marriage. So unAmerican is she indeed that she advises Letty, seriously considering psychoanalysis, to take the alternative: only 35 cents, she points out, for a fortune teller. The book is full of these sharp asides.

If Teresa's story is an *Education Sentimentale,* Letty's is a girl's *Tom Jones.* Both are real feats of imagination, their triumphs lying chiefly in the way they convey atmosphere and state of mind. Each concentrates on a single figure, one refusing the pressures of her environment, the other adapting all too perfectly. There is otherwise almost nothing by way of plot, and the many peripheral characters are presented flatly, often as grotesques. One doesn't credit them with inner lives. Instead, Mrs Stead's prejudices bristle about the place; and there is a good deal of grim humour. She's a formidable and entirely individual writer; I hope Virago will reprint more of her work.

Among this week's contributors:

RICHARD COBB is Professor of Modern History at Oxford. His books include *A Second Identity: Essays on France and French History* (1969) and *Reactions to the French Revolution* (1972).

ANTHONY QUINTON becomes President of Trinity College, Oxford, on 1 August. He has two books coming out this autumn, *The Politics of Imperfection* (Faber) and *Thoughts and Thinkers* (Duckworth).

PHILLIP WHITEHEAD is MP for Derby North. He produced *This Week* (Thames TV) from 1967-70 and was a member of the Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting.

MALCOLM BRADBURY is Professor of English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.

CHRISTOPHER REID has just won an E.C. Gregory Award. His first book of poems, *Arcadia,* will be published by Oxford next year.

Older Workers: work and retirement

Report VI, Part 1. International Labour Conference, 65th Session, 1979

A comprehensive review of the problems encountered by men and women approaching the end of their working lives or past retirement age. It deals with issues concerning discrimination on grounds of age, income protection, training, social security, etc., and analyses measures taken at the national and international levels with a view to ensuring equality of opportunity for older workers.
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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Julian Barnes

Heart Rate & Fatigue Factor

'Next on ITV, Ken Russell's return to television with the sensual *Clouds of Glory.*' It didn't sound too hopeful; but the first of the Bragg-Russell Lakeland biopics (Granada) kept to a defiantly sober idiom. Dorothy Wordsworth wasn't once tempted to imagine herself to be Mussolini, and William's natural urge to strut as a pub drag-artist, pasties awag to an amplified rendition of the Lucy poems, was firmly held in check. Nor were the NVLA given cause to cluck: the 'sensual' bit (the word is a TV synonym for 'sexual') turned out to mean no more than Dorothy in a routine see-through nightie episode, and some fumbling in a French haystack while the Revolution exploded around the amorous Will ('The poor have been oppressed far too long,' he murmured understandingly to his posh consort as mad peasants, fresh from *The Devils,* scrunched the manorial turnips). The trouble was that a dull script, some dubious casting (Felicity Kendall as game as she was misplaced) and a reined-in Russell didn't make for lively viewing. And even when reined in, there's still a basic coarseness to Russell's imagination: the 'still, sad music of humanity' stuff was done like a Birds Eye commercial, all tinkling harpsichord and Percy Thrower close-ups of blackberries, roses, etc.

This week's Coleridge episode at least had the courage of Russell's energetic vulgarity. We were back to swooping, swirling camerawork; stretched shots through wineglasses; upside-down leering faces; and a collage score of rampaging Romantic music. Whereas the Wordsworth script stuck to plodding veracity, the Coleridge went roaring off into tendentious metaphor, eager to prove what Russell always wants to prove, that the best artists are crazy, and that the artist's work is really no more than his encoded life. This time, *The Ancient Mariner* was taken to be a confessional *poème à clé:* Coleridge was the Mariner, Sara the albatross, and the drifting voyage his life. Two small problems: Coleridge was only 26 when he published *The Ancient Mariner,* so we had to have a scene where the plumply middle-aged poet (David Hemmings, heading towards a full Richard Attenborough) looked back and realised how the poem had predicted his entire life. The other was to see in quite what way Coleridge can be said to have 'killed' his wife, thus explaining the (not altogether unpleasing) spectacle of Kika Markham laid out in the stern of a rowing-boat with an anchor through her left breast.

Perhaps one of the troubles (uneasy though one is to seem to defend Russell's vaulting fantasies) is that television and poetry don't really mix. A shot of a poet making up a poem would be as dull as *The Nuts and Bolts of the Economy*; and when he's finished, all you can do is have it read to camera, or try and illustrate it. Moreover, the poems most likely to be enhanced by illustration are bad poems; good poems don't need pictures, or a musical score, or a windblown actor roaring them out from the top of Scafell. The director must feel stuck between aggrandising metaphor and dull literalism. 'I felt a sentiment of Being spread/O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still . . . O'er all that leaps and runs' (shot of hired rams hurdling drystone wall) 'and shouts and sings,/Or beats the gladsome air' (shot of mallards escaping from Peter Scott painting). Not much here to give the poetry a leg-up.

It was a relief that Ken Russell didn't get in on *A Quiet Word* (BBC-2), Derek Bailey's portrait of seven Ulster poets. The idea of, say, Mick McManus as Seamus Heaney, bellowing 'The voice of sanity is getting hoarse' out over a peat-bog would have been too much. Bailey's film, like all the poets he talked to, was quiet, unhectoring, unpartisan, responsible, honest and a bit depressed. On the one hand, as Heaney pointed out, he and his compatriots are fortunate to live on top of an intense historical upheaval (he said of Yeats, 'in an aesthetic sense he was lucky to have a civil war on his hands') and to gain from the extra interest automatically attracted to writers operating there. On the other hand, writing about the troubles isn't straightforward. As Paul Muldoon remarked, it's very hard to know what line to take: if there was a proper revolution, at least you could be a pamphleteer. In addition, all the poets were clearly resisting the temptation to hitch an easy ride on the back of terrible events: writing a poem about an atrocity guarantees a strong emotional response of a certain sort, but this makes the poem harder not easier. Significantly, two of the poems read used the Western as an analogy for the unrest in Ulster.

James Simmons talked of his fellows as 'middle-class magi without a star'; Michael Longley of trying 'to write about this peculiar thing which I don't understand better than the next man'; Paul Muldoon of poets having 'no mandate' for writing about the troubles – though, as he pointed out, they don't have a mandate for writing about love either, or the bark of a tree, or anything. They just do it. But why do they do it? Longley offered the Freudian line of 'I think art is born in pain'; in his view, both art and civil unrest sprang from neurosis – 'violence is a cancerous form of art'. If we accept it, this is a cheerless formulation – the implication being that it is not the civil unrest which has brought the violence to Ulster, but the tribal neurosis which has caused both the violence and the art. Either way, it must be both an exhilarating and a dispiriting time to be an Ulster poet: so close to fierce events, yet so certain of the blank cartridges of your work. Heaney talked of his more personal poems in *North* draining off 'the dirt from the sump'; but no one else had any illusions that they could be anything other than poets of record. James Simmons has given up writing ballads: 'the sort of applause I get is from people like you who agree with me anyway, and Unesco and visiting professors. No one sings my songs in the street, you know. They sing *Behind the Wire.*' Auden wasn't quoted, but he'd said much of it before, about Yeats:

> Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
> Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,
> For poetry makes nothing happen.

Not much British cheer all round this week: neither on *Panorama* (BBC-1), where a faster-talking Mrs Thatcher was narrowing her nostrils at the scent of victory; nor on *Golf: the Open* (BBC-1 and 2), which I gave up in disgust when my namesake Brian hoofed a ball with his putter straight off the green and into a bunker (I'm getting worried about our golfers – our top two prizewinners had the old English names of Oosterhuis and Faldo). The most refreshing programme provides this column's NVLA footnote. Those disappointed with the staidness of *Clouds of Glory* should try the new 'sensual' motoring show *Top Gear* (BBC-2), which had Angela Rippon advocating nocturnal fornication in motorway laybys. Angela, it appears, often drives home to the West Country late at night after reading the News (she takes the M4, then the M5, in case you need to know), and agreed to be wired up to test her 'heart rate and fatigue factor'. The devices, not very surprisingly, proved that on a long drive you get tired and sleepy. Angela claimed that a cardiologist had told her you ought to get out and run around every two hours; either that, the Queen of unbiased BBC information reported from high above some concrete Forte's pull-off, or you could make love. She then flipped us a grin and said, 'Well, I'm off home, and what I do now is my business.' So that's why the cheeky minx never looks tired in the newsroom.

Television – 2

Phillip Whitehead

Jacob's Ladder

The departure of Jeremy Isaacs from Thames Television, where he had been Controller of Programmes since 1974, was inevitable once Brian Cowgill arrived from the BBC to be Managing Director. The two men do not actively dislike each other, but the flair of the one for scheduling and the other for programme-making could never have joined happily together. Nor did they, and it is the programmes man who has quit.

So far, so inevitable, but the resignation does more than end a remarkable 11-year career at Thames. It raises questions about what is happening to ITV companies, with Thames *primus inter pares*, and about what the IBA wants to happen to them. A kind of creeping corporationism seems to be overtaking Thames. The people who are being eased out, or find their contracts under close and prolonged scrutiny at board level, are in part refugees from the same ailment at its source. The endless proliferation of bureaucracy at the BBC, the hymns sung to line management and reference up, were uncongenial for some. Paradoxically the commercial

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companies, Granada, Thames, and the newcomers LWT and Yorkshire, provided havens for many a free spirit. My personal recollection of working for Thames, when line management consisted of persuading Jeremy Isaacs and Howard Thomas that a thing should be done, was exciting by contrast with the BBC. Things stayed like that for some time and ITV current affairs coverage earned golden words from my colleagues on the Annan Committee last year.

The new arrivals from the BBC seem to be arriving not as desirable aliens but as shock troops hired to fight a war that does not need to be won. The schedulers and executives will bring their line managers in their knapsacks. Smaller versions of the Corporation will be constructed, and the best talent that money can buy will settle down to win the ratings war, persuading advertisers who are in any case falling over themselves to buy up the air-time available. Television journalism of any penetration, already at some risk in the BBC, will be a very low priority in any such ITV strategy.

And what, at this turning point, has the IBA done? With ineffable timing it has banned a *This Week* programme on Northern Ireland, ostensibly because it dealt with an Amnesty report which had not yet been published in full, although it had been extensively discussed in the press and by the BBC. I cannot see any section of the Independent Broadcasting Act which can be invoked to justify this foolish decision. Much has followed from it. Jeremy Isaacs, recovering all his journalistic instincts, fought for the programme up to his board. When the battle was lost he defied instructions and allowed the material to be handed over to the BBC, so that some part of it could be screened. *This Week* was under sentence of death anyway. The department's proposed three-part documentary on Irish history, *The Orange, The Green, and the Red, White and Blue*, had failed to get past Mr Cowgill. Reporters like Peter Taylor have been placed under increasing difficulty when they have tried to cover Northern Ireland.

The IBA ban, dressed up as a 'postponement', has had a profoundly damaging effect. It probably only marginally hastened the departure of Jeremy Isaacs, which in turn will weaken those whom he has been able to protect. But it will greatly increase the companies' tendency to self-censorship, and to isolate or neutralise those who insist on raising awkward questions. This is especially true when franchises are coming up for renewal, when keeping your record unblemished with the Brompton Road set is all important. Senior producers at Granada, Thames and LWT, the three companies best established in current affairs, have jointly requested a meeting with Lady Plowden to discuss some of the consequences of her conduct. They have not had it.

Nor should this be seen solely in media terms. The front bench agreement on Ulster, and the certain lack of any political initiative before a general election, make it a hard subject to cover in conventional 'balance' terms. But no free society can or should ignore what is alleged to have happened at Castlereagh. None which does is likely to beat the terrorists in the long term. If television coverage is diminished or neutered, then that will have consequences right across the media, following on from the symbiotic relationship between BBC and ITV current affairs. Those BBC programmes which do try to maintain their coverage, as *Tonight* has done, will not be helped by a silence from the other side of the duopoly, by the construction of another Jacob's Ladder of upward referral in ITV to rival their own.

If it is constructed it may well be even harder to climb, for at the top of it will be those who have never known the awkward integrities of journalism. The IBA is now standing meekly by, waiting for a second television channel to fall into its lap, while the yellow press savages the idea of a new and separate outlet. The departure of Jeremy Isaacs from Thames, regrettable though it is for that company, at least opens up the possibility that he would be free to work for an Open Broadcasting Authority. The power to inspire, a passionate commitment to good programmes, and an ability to work within limited means: these are rare assets. Even in ITV they ought to be worth more than the ability to maximise the audience at all times. For an OBA they would be indispensable.

Sport

Russell Davies

Branded

It has been a pretty good week for sport, except at the Royal International Horse Show, where Harvey Smith (not to blame this time) turned up riding a horse called Sanyo Music Centre. It was a normal sort of horse – four legs, tail, ran straight into a fence – but it was called Sanyo Music Centre. I understand the creature used to be known as Graffiti, which is not a very wonderful name to begin with, but I would rather it had been called Lavatory Pan than Sanyo Music Centre, as ugly and dead a brand name as could be devised, and so unmammalian that the BBC commentator, bless his toffee nose, could scarcely bring himself to pronounce it. If he goes on calling it Graffiti, however, the Sanyo people will not be slow to make representations to his employers. Whereupon the BBC will sigh defeatedly and instruct him to stick to Sanyo Music Centre, on the grounds that the Corporation is merely there to record proceedings organised, in the first instance, by sportsmen and their financiers.

It's a bit unreasonable, actually, to expect the BBC, by itself, to do anything very resolute about the matter. But I don't see why the code of practice under which (*just about* under which) advertisers already operate shouldn't include restrictions on the spread of brand names. In particular, it should be stipulated that living things, like this unfortunate horse, should not be made to bear the names of commercially manufactured or marketed articles. Such a ruling might well have helped to avoid the ridiculous and shaming situation at recent athletics meetings, where young women still very much on the hoof have been carrying the words 'British Meat' right across their bust-lines. Something must happen, anyway, or next year's Philips Industries Championship at the Royal International Music Centre Show will be won by Wall's Old English Pork Sausages With Herbs, followed by Delsey Toilet Rolls, both of them ridden by Kellogg's 30 Per Cent Bran Flakes David Broome.

The marketing mystery of the Open Golf Championship at St Andrew's proved to be: who was the man behind those pullovers? Practically everybody was inside them – those expensive-looking efforts with diamond shapes picked out in so many caressingly different and oh-so-washable colours on their fronts. Somebody must have been offering these round on a free trial; and seeing that the astute international *commerçant* Nicklaus was wearing one, I dare say he was the source. Golden Bear Knitteds, Ltd. Or perhaps it was the Japanese, at least two of whom had them on at any one time. Yamaha Cashmeres. Or could it have been Oosterhuis Outerwear? The mind has given up boggling, but questions like this make it niggle occasionally.

In the Prudential Assurance Trophy cricket matches, Adidas Protectors England made pretty short work of New Zealand Lamb Chops New Zealand. With Randall back in it, our side looks even more boundingly irrepressible than before: the fielding is totally un-English, and we now seem to be employing batsmen who are just not prepared to score slowly. Even Radley, who has the reputation of an 'accumulator', actually looks keen to do some accumulating. Crowds around the country are beginning to give Bonko Skull-Caps Mike Brearley a hard time for his batting, to which persecution he has responded by hypnotising the opposition (his new psychotraining at work again) into dropping the very simple chances he offers them in the slips. But I will not chastise Bonko Brearley further – in spite of the fact that his father, Horace Brearley, the mathematics master, made an esteemed NS colleague of mine stand on his chair in class, when said colleague was *sixteen* – because his results are excellent; his teamspirit would seem to have gone off the top of the chart; and at Old Trafford, he even managed to bowl the unlucky Miller (who must have been wondering if he'd been picked for the look of his moustache on the team photo) right through an 11-over allotment. Among the many other encouraging signs has been the

Arts Council
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Intending applicants, who must be resident in England, should write for an information sheet and application form, enclosing an A4 sized stamped addressed envelope to:

Richard Lawrence, Music Officer, Arts Council of Great Britain, 105 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AU.

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new solidity of Gooch, who was most unfortunate to be run out in Manchester on account of the sloth of the Bonko representative who shall be nameless. (His father was a despotic maths master with a down on potential NS employees.)

Trapped in front of the tube on Sunday, I watched with savagely mounting indifference as the British Grand Prix whined and snivelled its way through the afternoon. Nothing about this event, or any of its fellows, appeals to me at all. The commentators have high, whirring voices developed to cut through the engine noise, which is a sort of high whirring. The result is a headache. The pictures are hardly ever impressive, because the views down the road are so foreshortened; one needs to be on the spot, to feel the whoosh of the slipstreams, the pong of the smoke etc., and get an even bigger headache. Reluctantly, I concede that there were one or two treasurable moments in Sunday's race: best of all was the puncture sustained by Patrese (I think – a lot of whirring going on), who came into the pits with one great black misshapen ex-tyre wobbling about insanely behind him. It looked as though he had run over Giles's Grandma, only to find the game old monster still blatting away at his bodywork with her giant patent-leather handbag as she whizzed around under the wheel. Such, anyway, are the idle fantasies of one reduced to watching the British Grand Prix. Fortunately, it soon snorted to a close, and an excellent finish to the cricket match (JOHN PLAYER LEAGUE) followed on the other channel. Set to get 11 in the last over against Notts, Lancashire made it, thanks to the informed swiping of 'Flat Jack' Simmons. Needing two off the last ball, he hit it so far into the air over long-on that it came down sopping with the early dews of a summer evening, and McVitie's Butter Fingers Barry Stead dropped it. Brian Clough was sitting in the stands in a shirt that looked as though it had palm trees on it – it should certainly have had palm trees over it – and one can only imagine his remarks at this outcome. (What does one mean, 'only'?)

This English

People have been on at this column about the split infinitive – but, you know, I'm not so sure. The split infinitive is never the enemy of clarity (which is the main thing, after all) and is seldom offensive to the ear (indeed, the whole construction is often more obtrusive when the adverb is made to loiter on the outskirts). I should be grateful to any reader who can supply the history of this taboo. Entry number 3 is provided as a token (and note the lay/lie bonus). Otherwise, two roving appositions. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Vere will inherit the title but not the private fortune. That will go to 11-year-old son Esmond fathered by his third wife at the age of 69. **John Gard** *Guardian* (Harvey Cole)

☐ Fighting broke out between black and whites [*sic*] yesterday at a National Front open air meeting at Hougland, Manchester, during the Moss Side by-election campaign. Bricks were hurled at a minibus three miles away, smashing windscreen and side windows. *Sunday Times* (Andrew McNeillie)

☐ The Channel Tunnel Refuses To Just Lay Down and Die. **Headline** *Guardian* (Alison Kelly)

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

You Blues

Irish Eyes and English Tears *Theatre Upstairs*
The Aspern Papers *Chichester*

True to the lately-established traditions of the Theatre Upstairs – that DHSS research unit with special responsibility for disaffected youth – Nigel Baldwin has been nosing about the terraces of Stamford Bridge in hopes of uncovering the who, what and why of that sociologically fashionable creature, the football hooligan. His dossier is, however, incomplete. True, he has watched the swaying ranks of blue and white and listened to the chants: a mournful 'come on, Chelsea' when the number nine squanders yet another open goal, a jubilant 'old Macdonald had a wank' when the Arsenal striker's educated left hoof does likewise. Such commonplace rituals give *Irish Eyes* its most arresting and effortlessly theatrical scene, one which ends, unsurprisingly enough, with the frustrated protagonist charging on to the field of play in a vain effort to get a lost match officially abandoned. Mr Baldwin evokes Saturday afternoon fever with some accuracy. He does not succeed in explaining its extraordinary intensity.

Still, who could easily explain the abandon of the expatriate Italian who regularly sits near me at the Bridge? What, precisely, provokes those Neapolitan yowls when an opposing player has been successfully sliced down from behind – 'you gotta him now, now you stamp-a on his head, now you bloody *keell* him'? Maybe his mother was bitten by a rabid linesman when pregnant. Each soccer fanatic presumably has a different psychological profile, and no doubt Chelsea Football Club harbours a few akin to Mr Baldwin's unruly Les: ignorant, unemployed, unhappily shacked up with an unmarried mother, disgusted by his own mum's promiscuity, yearning for the dad he never knew as a child. This last trait is, of course, the one that most clearly marks him out as a particular case, but it is also the one his author has chosen to emphasise. Indeed, he actually finds a vicarious father in the elderly tramp he meets en route to the match, abuses, insults and then befriends, and takes to see the slaughter of Chelsea by Arsenal. And at this point the play shifts course, moving away from public war-games and into the private battlefield Les keeps stretched out between his ears.

Unluckily, the switch doesn't exactly stun us with fresh insights. Les takes his pet dosser home, to the disgust of his fellow-fans and the fury of his girlfriend. 'Enjoy yourself for Christ's sake,' he tells the old boy as he beats her up. 'Don't let it put you off your grub,' he cries hospitably as he hurls her supper across the room. Then, in an abrupt reversal of roles, the same friends adopt the tramp as a sort of mascot, and take him off on a camping spree in sunny Hants, leaving Les to rage at what he dimly perceives as paternal betrayal. 'You left me, you ran off,' he screeches at the old man, proceeds to boot him in the head, perhaps fatally, and settles down in the cold night air with newspaper plastered protectively over his legs.

The play is finished, or as finished as it's going to get. The one-time soccer hoodlum turns out to be an embryonic hobo himself, a transition that, sad to say, needs to be much more penetratingly chronicled if we're to see its logic or feel its force. As it is, there are nice down-market performances from Annie Hayes, Alfred Molina and Karl Johnson, though the last-named's introverted, abstracted Les should surely carry more authentic venom in the sac beneath his tongue. But those hoping to expand their mental files, or at least that subsection of them headed 'youth, problems of', might do better to join me at Stamford Bridge next season and scrutinise the raw material at first hand.

Michael Redgrave's tailoring of *The Aspern Papers* tends to reinforce Henry James's reputation as a posthumous dramatist of odd distinction, one who failed when he tried to write plays and succeeded when others wrote them for him. The situation, as those who know the original novella will confirm, is characteristic, even archetypical: a prolonged tussle between the claims of the conscience and those of the gilded sensibility, that's to say between life and art. Henry Jarvis, alias Henry Jessamin, alias yet another H. J., dupes his way into the Venetian palazzo of the mouldering gorgon who was once the mistress of an early American poet, plotting to snitch his letters by making love to her niece. 'There is no baseness I would not commit for the sake of Jeffrey Aspern's papers,' Redgrave has him proclaiming ominously to the confidante whose dramatically convenient introduction first pitches him into what turns out to be a more glutinous honeypot than he had suspected.

Actually, there is a baseness he won't commit, being still an American, not yet Europeanised into a Gilbert Osmond. At any rate, he flinches when the niece indicates that the price of the Aspern papers is a wedding-ring; and into the stove they go, following the trail blazed by Hedda Gabler. This climax is a time coming, but the wait seems worth while. The tension is as considerable as James's mannerly muse can make it, and it is bolstered by Redgrave's instinctive theatricality, David William's deft production, and the efforts of three expert players: Kenneth Haigh, poised between Bostonian decency and plucked-capon charm; Jill Bennett, gently signalling, as she recently did in Rattigan's *Separate Tables*, the desperation behind the spinsterish stoop and mousy mannerisms; and Cathleen Nesbitt, that most benign of stage personalities, here transmuting herself into a baleful hag who totters up behind the plundering literatus hawks out the deadliest insults in her vocabulary – 'You publishing scoundrel!' Altogether, the evening manages to be both captivating and civilised, a dual tribute I've not often before felt able to offer Philistinism-on-Ouse, I mean Chichester.

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Films

John Coleman

Welcome and Hello

International Velvet (A) *Empire*
Revenge of the Pink Panther (A) *Odeon, Leicester Square*
Warlords of Atlantis (A) *Warner 2 and 3; Swiss Scene; Classic, Oxford Street*
Lebanon – Why? (A) *Classic, Oxford Street*
Wombling Free (U) *Studio, Oxford Street*

For reasons, conceivably happily, beyond my control I never got to see the 1944 *National Velvet* and the burgeoning Liz Taylor. So you will be saved astute comparisons of any kind between that historic item and Bryan Forbes's *International Velvet*: which is probably as well, as – slightly to my professional alarm – I appear to be saying welcome and hello to a Film for All the Family. It is the sort of thing the very talented Mr Forbes was proposing he was going to promote when he was, for a short, bitter time, a film mogul. He went on to back at least a couple of the sillier and nastier 'X' jobs around. But now I come to praise him, this pro (actor, writer, producer, director), for having brought it off: the biggest bit of kitsch I recall enjoying in a long while.

It concerns an orphaned American girl in England, a horse and some manner of magic Olympics where the kid, Sarah (Tatum O'Neal), pulls it off for us. Like at the last ditch or fence. It is extraordinarily well edited, by Tim Gee. He cuts away – or maybe Mr Forbes also had something to do with this – when the essentially sentimental tale is in danger of lurching into your absolute bathos. The script, by clever Mr Forbes again, is often pretty damn good, let it be said. And it is said, extremely persuasively on the whole, by a cast that includes his beautiful wife, Nanette Newman, and – most savingly – by that super actor, Anthony Hopkins, as a cruel-to-be-kind riding coach. I suspect that it is his performance that is inclining me to overrate this event.

Revenge of the Pink Panther? Well, yes, but I thought Blake Edwards, who directs once again, and Peter Sellers – who does a marvellous stumble-through, both physically and verbally as the incompetent Gallic cop who turns up trumps while holding a hand of thumbs – had said bye-bye to this lucrative game. One can only assume filthy lucre enticed them back into what is basically a fairly sad re-run along the old tracks. Only this time an alarming amount of money was put into some not very significant stuff in Hong Kong. Sellers is, inevitably, funny as hell at times (a Toulouse-Lautrec gag, a supremely farcical old-style Chicago gangster impersonation among massively smooth actual ones, dressed neatly, normally) and he contrives that indescribable torture of Franglais as sweetly as ever. It continues to be a pleasure to see and hear him: one could just wish that Sellers chose better vehicles than this costly rickshaw.

Warlords of Atlantis has a few rather fine monsters, amongst whom we may well include Doug McClure. The technical monsters – who belong in a supremely silly yarn, *way* after Jules Verne and involving some late-19th-century circular diving-bell, Atlantis, boutique-décors when we arrive at one of its cities (I could have got the plot wrong: don't write in) – are quite something, immense, scaly, ugly, as all monsters should be. Modeller: Arthur Healey. I assume hero Doug's modeller was a Mrs McClure. As I recall, which is less than totally, there is a little listenable-to dialogue in here: the movie, at odd points, has the sense to send itself up.

Lebanon – Why?, a documentary, almost asks itself a question. You are probably a lot more up in these affairs than I am – and I am not wanting to be facetious – but there are areas of the newspaper (this journal included) that I am very bad at reading and even worse at understanding. The film I am pointing your attention to helped me in no way to understand what had been happening and clearly continues to happen in what is commonly (and I mean commonly) known as 'a war-torn landscape': it shows dead, mutilated bodies; it furnishes a deal of close-ups of head-on interviews that I found bafflingly pointless. No: that is not true. What is true is that this documentary, made by George Chamchoun with what had to be steady bravery, does – in effect – make a point. But it is the old one about the sordidness, the wounds, the gore, the futility, the sheer bloody beastliness of war – anywhere.

After that, *Wombling Free*. Lovely to be able to say it comes as light relief. Frankly, it don't. It is about as heavy as an advertisement for behaving environmentally gently, morally, can come. I have never been a Womble fan, and to find them inserted into a genuine farrago (alas, directed by that endearing actor Lionel Jeffries, who absolutely did a lovely job with *The Railway Children*) is sort of lowering: it bores for ecology, them and their wretched felty toy-faces.

Peter Porter

Occam's Razor

Never take the more unlikely explanation
of any event in preference to the likely –
just so, I say to myself, as I consider
my life and conclude that this long haul
to a sort of maturity is nothing more
than a persistence of arriving in one
with nowhere to go, rather than,
as I once thought,
an inveterate but soon to be vindicated
earnest restlessness at the port of life,
a magic resistance to time, enough to
keep me the youngest person in the room
as well as the most ironically serious.

But then reflect that if one is to tease
out feelings from razors, one might prefer
to think of Ibsen's madman
sharpening himself
or, in grateful suddenness, Haydn offering
his English visitor that marvellous quartet
in F Minor – what the gods mean by words
goes the long way round or takes on flesh
in dreams for the far vistas of nicknames.

Music

Andrew Clements

In the Jungle

St Bartholomew's International Festival
A Concise History of Modern Music by PAUL GRIFFITHS *Thames and Hudson* £5.50

Twenty-three concerts in 12 days, 11 world premières, 10 British premières, 8 first performances in London – just the statistics of the St Bartholomew's Festival testify to the industry and ambition of its organisers. It was, extraordinarily enough, London's first-ever festival of contemporary music; even if it did not attempt to rival major continental new-music jamborees like Royan and Donaueschingen in its scope, it was an ample demonstration of the vitality and accomplishment of home-based artists in what remains a specialised field. Almost as important, it showed St Bartholomew-the-Great (within a stone's throw of Smithfield Market) to be an excellent auditorium, warm of sound yet with a manageable acoustic, even if the seats are clearly intended for rather less generous frames than mine. Whatever the fate of the festival, the building is now surely established as another of London's very useful occasional concert halls.

If energy and audiences are what count, this could become an annual event. If so, I hope that in future there'll be a firmer hand in evidence in the programme-building. This year there was just the hint of the catch-all in the inclusivity – the suspicion that groups agreed to appear and were allowed to choose their programmes with little advice, other than the proviso that 20th-century pieces should predominate. The result was a lack of focus, or rather several equally valid focal points. Among the British, Birtwistle was well represented, so was Paul Patterson; so were Hungarian and Polish composers. It was as if by gamely eschewing celebrity concerts (with one exception), the organisers hoped to compensate with a bewildering variety. So one remembered the performers more than the music they played.

In prospect, Electric Phoenix seemed likely to be the most interesting group. They are a recently formed vocal quartet, all four well-established young singers (three of them are ex-members of Swingle II), who employ a formidable range of electronic aids with great polish and precision, as the St Barts concert

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showed. What they lack at present is a repertoire. Their programme contained two modern classics, Cage's *Aria* and Stockhausen's *Expo*; the rest were first performances. John Rushby Smith's *Lifespan* for two female voices and tape-delay system showed how, with the help of electronics which turned every sound into an evocative series of decaying echoes, the bare minimum of musical invention could be stretched over a respectable timescale. Its pseudo-profound programme (a life-to-death allegory) could not obscure a vapid piece of pattern-making. Morris Pert's *The Ultimate Decay* drew some striking ideas from the vocalists, percussion and taped sounds, but at 40 minutes was far too long. The inspiration – the cosmological theory of the end of the universe – seemed far less pretentious in performance than it did in the programme note. Electric Phoenix carried off the whole evening with great dramatic flair but one hopes the slickness won't encourage them to make their programmes too popular. Their potential is so great – imagine what a composer like Brian Ferneyhough could write for the medium – that it would be a pity if they did not exploit it fully.

The only celebrity St Barts allowed itself was Krystof Penderecki, who conducted a programme of his own music with the excellent Royal Academy of Music Symphony Orchestra. All-Penderecki concerts tend to emphasise his short-windedness, and unfortunately this one began with one of his more asthmatic pieces, the sombre orchestral prelude *The Dream of Jacob*. Two works, however, were new to London: a Capriccio for violin and orchestra from 1967 and a more recent Capriccio for oboe and strings. Both are unashamedly display vehicles, but the violin piece has more substance – effervescent solo writing (with some very 19th-century cadenzas) and some suitably raucous orchestral effects. The oboe capriccio, originally written for Heinz Holliger, is familiar avant-garde oboe writing rather like Berio's *Chemins IV* in its sound world. It was pleasant enough while it lasted. The nave was packed for the Penderecki, very comfortably full for Electric Phoenix. If the planners can arrive at a more coherent schedule for next year, the festival could well become a valuable annual fixture.

Carving a coherent path through the jungle of 20th-century music is also the intention of the latest of Thames and Hudson's potted primers. As usual the illustrations are a fine example of the picture-researcher's art, but Paul Griffiths's text outshines them: it's the best non-technical introduction to modern music I've yet read. Griffiths's starting point is Debussy's *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, in which he finds many of the characteristics of musical modernism; from there he moves forward by association rather than chronologically. The result is an elegant text that never degenerates into a mere catalogue of composers; he has something pertinent to say about almost everyone. I noted only one factual error – 'I feel the air from another planet' is the first line of the *fourth* movement of Schoenberg's Second Quartet, not the third – and disagreed only once with his categorisation. I really can't see Webern's late music as a manifestation of Neoclassicism; if that's neoclassical, why are not some of the equally fastidious earlier works? Yet two points in a book which inevitably must deal in generalisations are few enough.

Weekend Competition

No 2524 Set by Stanley J. Sharpless

Time for us to indulge you with a high-summer comp. Sydney Smith's idea of heaven was eating *pâté de foie gras* to the sound of trumpets. What's yours? Up to 150 words prose, or 12 lines verse; by 4 August.

Result of No 2521 Set by Gerry Hamill

We asked for verses warning young colts and fillies of the dangers of equine VD.

Report by PC 49

It's softly-softly time down the complex section house at the moment, after the serious and reprehensible occurrences alluded to last week by the Super. Heads down, nod's as good as a wink, no more how's your father for a bit I can tell you, and a coroner's jury of green ones to the winners.

Quinquereme, by Ninevah, out of
Distant Sophia,
Racing up from Redcar – not in
record time –
With a handicap of spread-plate, spavin
hock, splayed hoof,
And suffering social sickness of a
catching kind.

Mating Spanish stallion succumbing to the
piss pus,
Drooping through erotics by the stud
farm doors.
Stewards are inquiring from Derby Day
to Christmas.
The bookies and the punters all regret
your sores.

Flirty Brit from Towcester, under
sweat-caked jock-strap,
Chasing off at Chester after bawdy bays;
Preserve your vestal sanctity for
thoroughbreds and top chaps,
Don't wreck the Calendar with
ill-planned lays!
R. COLSTON

When the wily gonococcus goes to Ascot,
And the spirochaetes all clap their hands
with glee,
An acute attack of willies
Overcomes both colts and fillies,
As the time gets near for them to have a pee,
For the act of urination
In an equine situation
Takes much longer than it does with you
or me.

There are lechers at the liveries
in Lambourne,
And at Towcester scarlet fillies run
the town,
If you raise your tail at Ayr
You'll get much more than your share,
And it pays to keep your blanket well
pinned down.
For the fee to cure your sin is
At the least Two Thousand Guineas,
For unbridled lust that's not worth
half-a-crown.
NOEL HENEGHAN

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No need for randy roans to fear
Indulging love's young coital dream,
With just one prophylactic smear
Of antispirochaetic cream —
Lest Syph their swelling balls beset,
Should they forget, should they forget!

No risks for frisky cobs, with crumpet,
In briskly having it away,
If they apply, before they hump it,
A squirt of penicillin spray –
For Doxy's Pox will get them yet,
If they forget, if they forget!
TERRY TOWLING

When you're feeling somewhat randy,
And your pulse beats as loud as a gong,
Though you're stiff and her legs are bandy,
Think on the horse with the luminous dong.
The dong, the dong, the dong, the dong,
The horse with the luminous dong.

So don't take an unknown lover,
All sexual gambling is wrong,
Chastity is the only cover
When the horse has a luminous dong.
The dong, the dong, the dong, the dong,
The horse with the luminous dong.
ROY KELLY

Do you remember a Ring, Miranda?
Do you remember a Ring
And the thudding of the studding at the
bidding of a pander
Coarse-horse-candour morse-propaganda
Flicker of the ear as the nose grows hot
To a rear to a gallop to a canter to a trot
To a dot dot dot dot dot dot dot –
Do you remember or not, Miranda?
Don't you remember a *thing*?
– No, no, Miranda! no more!
You're making my eyes so sore
With the sting of the flail of the tail and
the fling
Of the bucking of the kicking and the
outraged stare,
There there little filly, you're as clean as
the air,
You're a queen of a mare — and we go
next Spring
For a king, Miranda, a King!
GINA BERKELEY

If you let your passions ride you
When you feel the urge to mate,
Odds are that you'll find your chances
Finished at the starting-gate.

If you have a jump regardless,
Dread disease will run you close;
Would you rather be a champion
Or be saddled with a dose?

Fillies, we admire your beauty,
Colts, we marvel at your strength;
Those who dissipate their virtues
Often lose them by a length.

Little stud with nostrils flaring,
Modify your appetite;
Keep it for the one you fancy,
Save your love – and serve her right.
DAVID DOUBTFIRE

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Tony Miles

Chess

No 92 **June Problems**

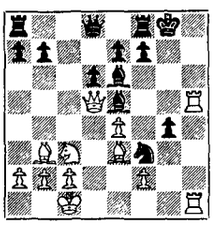
The first three June problems were fairly simple. **Problem 85 (3r1rk1 / pp3ppp / 8 / 2p5 / 4PBqn / P1P3PP / Q3RP1K / R7)** came from Rodriguez-Olafsson, Las Palmas 78. The finish was 1 . . .Q-B6; 2.R-KN1, Q-N7ch! 3.RxQ, N-B6ch; 4.K-R1, R-Q8ch mating. 2 . . . R-Q8 is also strong, but inaccurate as it gives White the chance to struggle on with 3.PxN.

Problem 86 (4r1k1 / 1b3pbp / 1q4p1 / 4nPB1 / 1prN3Q / 6N1 / PPP3PP / R2R3K) came from Larsen-Miles, Las Palmas. After 1 . . . N-B6! 2.PxN, RxN; 3.RxR, BxPch; 4.K-N1, BxRch; 5.K-B1, Q-N4ch mates, but not 2 . . . BxPch? 3.NxB, RxQ; 4.NxR with enough for the queen.

Problem 87 (3qk2r / r1p2pp1 / p2p3n / 1p1Bp3 / 3PP1p1 / 4Q3 / PP3PP1 / RN3RK) occurred in Mestel-Crouch, Aaronson Masters 78. Black won quickly by 1 . . . N-B4! with a familiar rook-file mate. After 2.BxPch either KxB or K-B1 were acceptable solutions.

Problem 88 (see diagram) came from analysis of an old Benko game and was by far the most interesting of the set. Anyone who consulted endgame works would have discovered a similar position with the Black bishop on the h2-b8 diagonal which is drawn, and consequently Black threatens to draw by 1.B-N6. This can be prevented by 1.R-KN7, but after . . . B-Q5, (threatening B-K4) White achieves nothing (but not 1 . . . B-K6? 2.P-B7! as we shall see). Consequently the only move to affect the basic character of the position is 1.P-B7. Then if 1 . . . B-N6; 2.K-N6 and K-B6 wins, so Black must keep his bishop on the g1-a7 diagonal. But if, say, 1 . . . B-N8 then 2.R-K1! B-R7 (or 2 . . . B-Q5; 3.R-QB1 and K-N5-B6 wins) 3.K-N6! BxPch; 4.K-B6, K-Q1 (else R-K8ch) 5.R-Q1ch, K-B1; 6.R-KN1 and 7.R-N8ch wins. Thus the only move is 1 . . . B-B4! in order to meet 2.R-K5 with B-Q3 attacking the rook and thus preventing 3.K-N6. So 1.P-B7! B-B4! 2.R-B7, B-Q5! 3.R-N7 (If 3.R-B4, B-K4) B-K6! 4.R-R7, B-B7! etc, but, White has a last trick: 5.R-K7, B-B4! 6.R-Q7! Now if 6 . . . KxR? 7.K-N7 wins, and if 6 . . . B-B7; 7.R-R7! Zugzwang – wins (but not 7.R-Q2 – read on), or 6 . . . B-K6; 7.R-N7! B-B4; 8.K-N5, B-Q5; 9. R-N4 and 10.K-B6 wins (but again not 7.R-Q3). So, by a process of elimination, the only move is 6 . . . B-N8! Then 7.R-Q1 (others repeat previous positions), and now not 7 . . . B-B7? 8.R-QB1 or 7 . . . B-K6? 8.R-K1! (but again not R-Q3) B-Q7, 9.R-K2,B-B5 (else R-QB2) 10.K-N6 winning, but 7 . . . B-N3! 8.KxB stalemate (or 8.K-N5, KxP or R-QB1, BxP drawing). Similarly, an earlier B-K6, R-Q3 allows B-N3 drawing. Note that this resource does not work earlier e.g. 1.P-B7, B-N3? 2.K-N5! K-N2 (or BxP; K-B6 wins) 3.P-B8=Qch, KxQ; 4.KxB wins.

Lastly **Problem 89 (8 / 1P6 / 8 / 6pk / 7n / 1R3pp1 / 3r4 / 1R4K1)** was a little messy, and caused more trouble than I expected. 1.P-N8=Q loses : P-B7ch; 2.K-R1, P-N7ch; 3.K-R2, P-N8=Qch 4.RxQ, N-B6ch! (but not P-B8=Qch; 5.K-R1 or . . . P-B8=Nch; 5.K-R1, R-R7 mate?! 6.QxR) 5.K-R3 (5.RxN, P-B8=Qch mates as does 5.K-N3, PxR=Qch) P-N5ch! 6.RxP, P-B8=Qch; 7.K-N3, Q-N7ch; 8.K-B4, QxRch; 9.K-K3, Q-Q5ch; 10KxN, R-B7ch; 11.K-N3, Q-R5 mate. Prize-winners will be announced later.

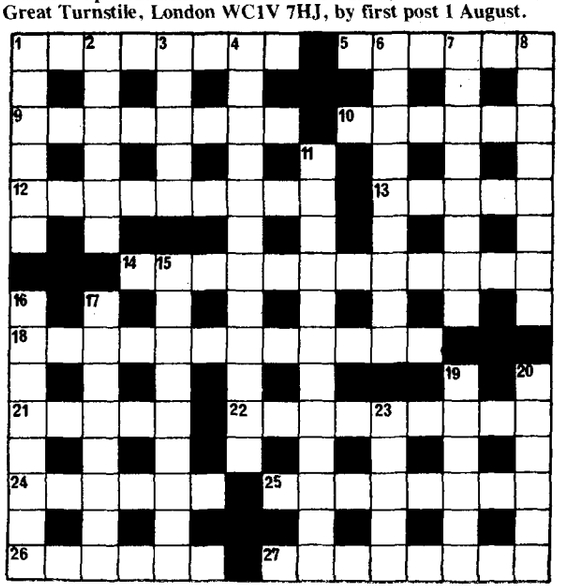


Problem 92
White to play. How should the game go? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 2 August

Solution to Problem 90
1.QxBch! NxQ; 2.R-K8ch! NxR; 3.B-N5ch, N-B3; 4.BxN mate.

Weekend Crossword 1270

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1270, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 1 August.



ACROSS

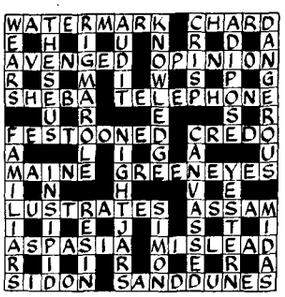
1. Play with favourite woman of the streets. (8).
5. '—— to her husband, frank to all beside' (Pope) (6).
9. Not classical, but it makes Caesar, for example, almost go like clockwork (8).
10. Places for putting vegetables (6).
12. A horse takes in processed grain as food (9).
13. A win repeated (5).
14. This tragedy seems to make for mortal merriment (12).
18. Relatives of hers holding a man with soup (12).
21. Father as writer (5).
22. Delight with variations on a rare piano tune (9)
24. A loud attack makes one scared (6).
25. Unpleasant creature shows the company is involved with porn (8).
26. After game he includes the run (6).
27. Shopkeepers who almost have learning in their hands (8).

DOWN

1. Be niggardly although one has a thousand in one's wallet (6).
2. Notice rise of former tennis star (6).
3. Food needed to set a country up (5).
4. Poe said epics become a means of projecting images (12).
6. Unrelenting fury in a Norwegian town (9).
7. Scots whose origins hold us back (8).
8. Where there is oriental doctrine about wickedness (8).
11. Saw a friend about the mixed choir producing figures (12).
15. Rose sends a short note about a man (9).
16. Stroke wrecks Phil in coastal waters (8).
17. For Latin translation this press is needed (8).
19. 'The primal —— shine aloft like stars' (Wordsworth) (6).
20. When he's put back, he's done wrong (6).
23. Shaver comes in with a spare razor (5).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1268



Prizewinners to No 1268
Ashley Jones (Surrey)
Kenneth R Shimeld (Belfast)
Ian Turner (Essex)

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol. 96 No. 2470

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Theatres

CHICHESTER. 0243 81312. 21 & 27 July at 7.0, 22 July at 2.0 'The Aspern Papers', 22 July at 7.0 'The Inconstant Couple'. Prev. 24 July at 7.0, 25, 26, 28 & 29 July at 7.0 'Look after Lulu'.

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